

The PENTAGON of CREATION

According to the Upanishads

- *The Panch Tattvas (5 Bhuts or elements)
- *The Panch Prans (5 vital winds or life forces)
- *The Panch Koshas (5 sheaths or cells)

***##**

English Exposition by:-

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

Ayodhya (Faizabad, U.P.)

Full address of Author—36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,
P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123
Distt.—Faizabad, U.P. India.

Mobile: +919451290400, +919935613060

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >

Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >

(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >

Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia

Goodreads:

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai_Kumar_Chhawchharia

© By Author—All rights reserved by the author. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission of the author-Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.

NOTE: Author's Books are available at:--

- (1) www.amazon.com in its Kindle + Paper-Back Print Editions.
- (2) www.pothi.com in a Print edition.
- (3) www.draft2digital.com and its various vendors' platforms in E-Book edition.
- (4) www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com
- (5) www.archive.org : at following URL:
https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia

Language: English.

-----*****-----

CONTENTS

1. Dedication: Page 4
2. Preface: Page 5
3. Chapter—1 The Panch Tattvas (5 Bhuts or elements): Page 8
4. Chapter—2 The Panch Prans (5 vital winds or life forces): Page 108
5. Chapter—3 The Panch Koshas (5 sheaths or cells): Page 163
6. About the Author: Page 183

-----*****-----

DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

The Pentagon of Creation

According to the Upanishads

- *The Panch Tattvas (5 Bhuts or elements)
- *The Panch Prans (5 vital winds or life forces)
- *The Panch Koshas (5 sheaths or cells)

Preface

This book titled “The Pentagon of Creation” is based entirely on the Upanishads.

The entire creation is said to be constituted of FIVE basic units or subtle entities that act as the building blocks or bricks that go to mould the creation in the way it exists today. These five fundamental entities represent the five basic aspects of creation, and to know the finished product known as the creation we must know about these five fundamental units that have gone into the building of this vast, mysterious, enigmatic and most complicated structure that stands before us as the ‘world’.

The visible world is only the exterior facet of creation; there are many things that are hidden from view but have an extremely strong influence on what is seen on the surface. These subtle elements determine the inherent character and nature of everything in creation.

Our ancient sages and seers contemplated and researched on this hidden and subtle aspect of creation to unravel its hidden mysteries. They studied the scriptures and thought deeply into the matter of things. Over time they came to the conclusion that the entire edifice of creation has acquired its shape and form as well as characteristic qualities that are directly dependent upon the five basic units which we shall read about in this book.

Now, these five entities were given different names and features depending upon the angle from which they are viewed or studied, or on the primary function they perform in this creation. The rest of the visible gross world has evolved from them.

They are like the primary elements in chemistry from which so many permutations and combinations can be arrived at that we have with us today countless chemicals with their unique properties and physical features that modern science has produced. Similarly, we can cite so many other examples to understand this phenomenon. For instance, there are only limited numbers of alphabets in any given language, but the words that are built around them are countless. Then there are constant additions and variations in usage and dialect, but all of them have the basic alphabet as the same. If we go deeper we discover that all the alphabets of all the languages in existence have ‘sound’ as their basic ingredient. It is the different way this sound is uttered by us that we have devised our alphabets and languages as civilization developed. The same sound is the basis of music and the playing of the musical instruments.

Another simple illustration will clear the concept of the five basic entities of creation that are responsible for creating such a vast and mind-bogglingly variable creation. Suppose we have five separate samples of liquid (say, plain water, salty water, sweet water, water which has both salt and sugar, and water in which some fruit juice is added), five separate samples of colours (say, red, yellow, pink, black, white and green, or any other five colour for that matter) that are to be added to these five liquids, and five glass containers of different colours.

Now, if we were given the freedom to mix the liquids and the colours in any way and in any ratio or proportion we want, and then put them in any glass tumbler we wish, wouldn't we have so many varieties of coloured liquids of different tastes and appearing to be different in colour when viewed through the containers of different colours? Imagine, for instance, a sample of pure red liquid when viewed through a glass container that is green, and then the same sample when seen through a yellow vessel. Wouldn't the observer see different colours in the liquid? Then take the example of the same liquid in which different colours are added in different proportions or ratios. For instance, a sample of liquid in which red is mixed with some other colour, may be one, may be two, or may be all the five colours mixed together. Then again imagine the varieties of samples that are created when each of these five colours is added in different ratios to different liquids in differently coloured glass containers. Remember, the liquid will also have its own basic colour—clean water does not have the same colour as lemon juice; even highly saline water of the ocean will not look the same as the sparkling water of a spring! Obviously, the scope of permutations and combinations are beyond imagination. Therefore the result we observe would also defy counting and numbering.

But in all this colourful experimentation the basic ingredients we have remain limited to only 'five'—viz. five liquids, five colours, and five coloured glass containers. But the results that their interaction and conjunction produce are beyond counting.

This simple illustration will help explain how only five basic entities and their basic off-shoots have created this vast and variable world in which each unit has its uniqueness and characteristic quality which is at divergence to its immediate neighbour. At the same time, it also helps us to understand the outer parameters of qualities and characteristics that determine the overall inherent nature and virtues of this creation as a whole at the macrocosmic level, and the innumerable living beings that live in it as individuals at the microcosmic level.

From the example of the five liquids, five colours and five containers cited above, it is easy to understand this. We can only get those shades of colours that are possible by combining the colours made available to us, and nothing beyond that. Similarly, we have 'water' as the basic liquid for our experiment, so whatever we do we will only have countless varieties of 'water', but not 'wine' for instance!

From the metaphysical perspective, we shall study the fundamental five aspects or facets of creation, which we shall call the 'Pentagon of Creation', with this understanding in mind. Just like the case of clay being the basic ingredient that is moulded by the potter in various shapes and sizes to make toys and utensils, and colouring them in different colours, the myriad qualities and characteristics that we see in this creation are founded on five fundamental entities.

The ‘five’ basic ingredients of creation have the following forms—the ‘Panch Tattvas’ or the five elements, the ‘Panch Prans’ or the five life-forces of creation, and the ‘Panch Koshas’ or the five cells or sheaths that give these five Tattvas and Prans their outer covering, acting as their habitat, as the enclosure within which lie the whole gamut of creation. In order to get a comprehensive picture of creation that is like a ‘Pentagon’ made up of these five units, we must know first learn about its five ingredients, and how they interact and affect each other.

For the purpose of our study, we shall divide this book into three Chapters as follows:—

Chapter 1—It deals with the Panch Tattvas—also called the Panch Maha Bhuts or the five great primary elements of creation.

Chapter 2—It deals with the Panch Prans—which refer to the five vital winds which are the life forces that support and control all aspects and functions of the life in this creation.

Chapter 3—It deals with the Panch Koshas—or the five sheaths which act as an enclosure within which all life exists in this world in all its varied manifestations, and it is the cell in which the Panch Bhuts and the Panch Prans reside to give shape and meaning to the visible world.

Date: 1st October, 2015

Author: Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >

Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >

(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia

Goodreads:

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai_Kumar_Chhawchharia

-----*****-----

The Pentagon of Creation

According to the Upanishads

Chapter 1

THE PANCH TATTVAS

(The 5 Fundamental Elements; the 5 Bhuts)

The five Tattvas are also known as the ‘Panch Bhuts’ or the five primary elements that form the basic building blocks of the visible world. In this section, we shall first read what constitutes these five Bhuts, then about their patron gods who preside over their functions, how they are to be understood from the perspective of meditation and contemplation and how these practices help in bringing about a union between all of them so that the spiritual aspirant can benefit from their combined forces and energy, what are their locations in the body of the living being, what are their colours and Beej Mantras, what role they play in the crafting of the gross body of the creature, their pyramidal structure etc.

Then we shall study these ‘Panch Maha Bhuts’ from the metaphysical perspective—the philosophy of their importance and their significance in the life of the creature, as well as the role they play in creation.

The five Tattvas or basic elements or ingredients of creation are the following—the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or liquid, and earth or anything that is solid and acts as a foundation for the rest of creation, in increasing or ascending order of density or grossness. [Refer Sharrirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 1-3.]

Generally speaking, the primary elements that constitute the building blocks of creation are called the Panch Maha Bhuts. These principal forces of Nature are responsible for the coming into being, the sustenance, the development and growth, and the conclusion of the entire creation as we know it. Their personified forms are imagined to be in the form of their *patron Gods* who actually control these elements and their functions in creation. These Gods have been described in *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 72 of Sam Veda tradition, *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse nos. 83-102 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178, and Canto 5, verse nos. 13-15 describe the *patron Gods*, *shape* and *colour* of these five elements.

How to do *meditation* by contemplating upon these five elements have been described in *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 49-51.

According to *Paingalo-panishad*, Canto 2, and *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are five basic or primary elements in creation, and the rest of the creation has evolved from them.

How the *five basic elements were used to create this world* has been described in Shukla Yajur Veda tradition's *Paingalo-panishad*, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2-8; and *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, and Canto 2, verse no. 1-12.

The *location* of these five elements in the body of the creature have been described in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 5, and Canto 2, verse no. 135-141; *Paingalo-panishad*, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2-8.

The *functions* of these five elements as well as the creation of the five sense perceptions, called the *Tanmatras* (perceptions of sight, smell, sound, taste and touch), have been described in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 6; and *Paingalo-panishad*, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2-4.

The *location, colours and Beej Mantras* of the five elements have been described in *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 85-102. It goes on to describe how meditation is to be done on these five elements.

How the body of the creature is formed by the five elements have been described in *Shaarirako Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1-3.

The *activities* and *pyramidal* structure of the five elements have been described in *Shaarirako Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 6.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse nos. 67-69 elucidates the fact that Yoga brings about a *union between the various elements or Dhaatus of the body*.

During formal forms of ritualistic worship, such as when worshipping a Pooja Yantra or worship instrument dedicated to some deity (such as the one dedicated to Lord Ram as described in the Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Cantos 4-5), or doing fire sacrifices, it is necessary to perform *Bhut Shuddhi* or purification of the elements.

The process of Bhut Shuddhi is of paramount importance during worship rituals. Now let us see what it means in metaphysical terms. It is referred to in the *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 1.

The *Bhut Shuddhi* is the formal purification of the five Bhuts (the fundamental elements in creation). It essentially consists of imagining that the body consists of the five basic elements, viz. earth, water, fire/energy, air/wind, and space/sky, and then first merging them all, one by one, into one single entity, and finally into super consciousness which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm. This process purifies the body as it does away with its grossness and transforms it into an entity that assumes subtlety associated with the pure consciousness.

The process is as follows—(a) Imagine that the body from the toe to the knees consist of the 'earth element', is square in shape, has the mark of the Vajra (goad), and is yellow in colour. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'Lam' (ॐ). (b) The part of the body from the knees to the navel consist of the 'water' element, is shaped like a crescent moon, has the mark of the lotus, and is white coloured. It is marked by the

seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'Vaṁ' (ॐ). (c) The part of the body from the navel till the throat (Adam's apple) consists of the 'fire' element which is triangular in shape, has the sign of 'Swastika' (卐), and is red coloured. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'Raṁ' (ॠ). (e) The part of the body from the throat till the root of the nose and the middle of the eyebrows consists of the 'wind' element, is hexagonal in shape, dark in colour, and has 6 dots outlining the six points of the hexagon. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'Yaṁ' (ॡ). (f) The part of the body from the root of the nose to the centre of the skull is the 'space/sky' element, is circular in shape, its colour is grey like smoke/fog, and it is marked by a flag/standard. The seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'Haṁ' (ॢ) is marked in it.

All these five elements should be merged with one another in a sequential form, beginning from the earth at the bottom of the body and going right up to the cranium where the sky element is located. In other words, the earth is made to submerge its self into the water element, the water into the fire element, the fire into the wind element, the wind into the sky or space element, and finally the sky/space element is freed from its confinement inside the skull to assume its original form as the vast, infinite, measureless and endless cosmos called the Prakriti or Nature in its macrocosmic dimensions. This Nature is without any specific attributes and is all-pervading and all-encompassing.

This Prakriti is also known as Maya which is the delusion-creating powers of Brahm, the supreme Consciousness. So, in the final step of purification, it is obligatory to remove this Maya altogether as it is the primary cause of the erroneous notion that the pure consciousness that is the true 'self of all living beings is the gross body consisting of elements of varying degrees of grossness, and that this body lives in a world which also consists of elements in varying degrees of grossness. Therefore, truthful cleansing would be a thorough rinsing of the inner-self so that all forms of delusions and misconception are removed.

When both the Maya (delusions and their attendant misconceptions and hallucinations) and the Prakriti (a person's natural habits, inclinations and temperaments) are eliminated, the worshipper is freed from all of their tainting affects. This results in his ability to relate himself with his truthful and immaculate form as the 'pure consciousness' rather than the gross body as well as the gross world consisting of the five elements in their varying degrees of grossness. In other words, the 'self' of the individual merges with the 'cosmic Self' or the cosmic Consciousness of creation known as Brahm. This is complete cleansing of the worshipper as it is only possible when all Maya and its negative affects are done away with. Mere physical washing of the gross body by taking ritualistic baths in rivers that are visibly polluted or by any other means can never truly clean the soul sufficiently enough so that it is prepared to receive the guest-of-honour in the form of Brahm, the Supreme Being!

In this way, the seeker/aspirant/worshipper should meditate for some time and imagine that he has merged himself, i.e. his Atma or soul, with the supreme Soul called the Parmatma so as to become inseparable from the latter. This Parmatma is no one but the cosmic Consciousness known as the supreme Brahm.

Then, after recovering from deep concentration and meditative trance, he should imagine that his body is being recreated from that supreme Brahm by following the reverse sequence of events. This newly created body will have been purged in a symbolic way of all the sins and faults which were present in the worshipper's earlier body.

Theoretically, it is like taking a new birth with a detoxified and purified body. The worshipper becomes a different person from his earlier self, and he then becomes eligible to worship Lord Ram using the divine Ram Yantra. The reverse sequence of events is as follows—the supreme soul—the world/Maya—space/sky—wind/fire—water—earth. Hence, the body has been purged and catheterized of all earlier impurities, and has now become worthy to worship the Lord who is immaculate, holy and divine.

The all-pervading, omniscient, omnipotent, attributeless, almighty, all-encompassing and auspicious supreme Soul is present as the seeker's or worshipper's Atma in his own body. This process is deemed to be the best way for the symbolic purification of body that is needed to offer worship to the Supreme Being who cannot be approached with a polluted and dirty self.

The importance to thoroughly cleanse oneself before approaching the Lord is simple to understand even in the modern context—can anyone ever imagine that he would present himself in the royal court of a king, or in the front of the president of a sovereign country while he is dirty, stinking, shabbily dressed and in a general unkempt condition?

Now we shall quote the selected Upanishads cited above vis-à-vis the five primary elements of creation, honoured as the 'Panch Maha Bhuts' or the Five Great Elements.

(i) Sam Veda's *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 72—

"From the Atma (i.e. the macrocosmic Soul of creation; the cosmic Consciousness) emerged the Akash (the space/sky element), from it emerged the wind element, from the wind was created the fire element, from the fire came into being the water, and the water finally created the earth element.

These 5 primary ingredients or elements of creation are called 'Panch Bhuts', and their respective patron deities or Gods are Shiva, Ishwar, Rudra, Vishnu and Brahma respectively. Out of them, Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the sustainer, nourisher and caretaker as well as the protector of the creation, and Rudra is the annihilator or concluder.

Vishnu represents the 'Satwic qualities', Brahma stands for the 'Rajasic qualities, and Rudra symbolise the 'Tamsic qualities' of creation.

Amongst the Gods, Brahma was the first to come into being. Brahma was created to produce and propagate the world, Vishnu to sustain, nourish, develop, enhance and protect it, while Rudra was created for its final death and conclusion. Indra was created to enjoy it. 'Lokas' (worlds), Gods, animals, birds and humans as well as inanimate and immovable creatures (e.g. trees) —they are all produced by Brahma. Out of them, the body of humans is made by a combination of the 5 elements, as mentioned above, in different proportion.

The organs of perceptions and actions, the world that is the object of these organs, the vital winds which keep the body active, the mind-intellect and its attention towards the external world giving rise to the latter's awareness and its accompanying 'Ahankar' (ego, arrogance, haughtiness and pride)—are all comparatively gross in nature. The primary energy responsible for their creation is therefore called 'Gross Nature'. These

entities constitute the external body of the creature (the Atma or Jiva), and it is called its 'gross body'.

The 'gross body' has its counterpart in the subtler realms called the 'subtle body' of the creature. That is, each organ of sense perception has its subtler counterpart—the organ of mouth has speech, skin has touch, eye has sight, nose has smell, and tongue has taste. Similarly, there are 5 organs of actions present externally, and there are their subtler counterparts internally called their function. The gross ones are the hands, legs, mouth, genitals and anus. Their subtler functions are the following—doing deeds, movement, eating, producing and excretion respectively.

Likewise, the brain is the gross form and the intellect is its subtler counterpart. Belching, flatus, heartbeat, pulse etc. are the grosser forms of wind, while digestion, movement of intestine (the peristaltic movement), the functioning of the lungs (breathing), circulation of blood, absorption of nutrition and assimilation, maintenance and equilibrium inside the body, urination, formation and expulsion of stool are the subtler functioning of the vital winds. All these are called the 2nd body or the subtle/minute body of the creature. It is also called the 'Linga body of the creature'.

This body of the creature has all the 3 Gunas listed above (i.e. Sat, Raj and Tam) in varying configurations. This distinguishes one creature from the other, because no two creatures will have the three Gunas in the same proportion and configuration⁴. The Gunas constitute the causal body of the creature.

All creatures have these 3 types of bodies—the gross, the subtle and guna-driven causal body.

Every living creatures have 4 states of existence—Jagrat (the waking state), 'Swapna' (the dreaming state), 'Sushupta' (the deep sleep state), and 'Turiya' (a transcendental blissful state).

Taijas, Pragya, Vishwa and Atma are the 4 divine 'Purush' (the consciousness acting through different bodies or planes of existence) who are the patron deities or Gods of these 4 states of existence respectively.

The 'Vishwa' enjoys the gross world, the 'Taijas' enjoys loneliness, serenity and calmness, 'Pragya' enjoys the bliss of the causal body, and 'Atma' is a witness to all this and is beyond all of them put together."

(ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, and Canto 2, verse no. 1-12, 135-141—

"Canto 1, verse no. 4 = What is this world? It is a creation which results from the various faults associated with the five 'Bhuts' (which are earth, water, fire, air and space). How is the same egg-like rounded mass of cosmic jelly, called Pinda (which is the primordial cosmic embryo) divided into various divisions due to the faults associated with the five elements? All the five elements have their origin from the same source, and therefore are expected to be identical. But they aren't. This is because of the varying level of subtlety that they have and the different functions they would perform. These five basic, primary elements of creation combined in varying ratios and proportions, in different permutations and combinations, to give (produce) an infinite variety of products (things) in this creation. This is the reason why the visible world is so multifaceted and varied.

Each of its unit possesses a specific and unique character, quality, virtue, potential etc. depending upon a particular configuration in which these primary elements had combined or mixed together to create that particular thing, and this configuration is not repeated again, thereby bestowing a unique character to that particular thing.

Besides this, each unit of creation was assigned different name, exhibited different features, assumed different functions and roles depending upon the place, circumstance, time and context in which they existed. As a result, there came into being uncountable numbers and forms of Gods as well as the creatures and other things in this world [4].

[Note—It is easy to understand this phenomenon. Just like a given set of five primary colours can be mixed together in umpteen numbers of combinations to create an astounding array of colours of various hues and shades that are so varied in their external appearances as to be completely unique in themselves and have no apparent relation to the original ingredients, these five elements of creation (sky, air, fire, water and earth) combine with each other in equally innumerable permutations and combinations, in uncountable ratios and quantities, to give rise to things (units of creation) of varying subtlety and grossness and of such stupendous variations that no two units resembled one another, no two units were identical, and each one of them had its unique character and identity. The possibilities in which these five primary elements could be mixed or combined were infinite, and therefore the possibilities of type of creatures and material things formed by this mixing or combination were also infinite. And so came into being this fascinatingly magnificent, stupendously multifarious and astoundingly varied creation.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 5 = The ‘sky’ or space (Akash)¹ element has five subtle divisions or forms—Antakaran (the discriminatory intellect; discriminatory powers; wisdom; morality), Mana (the mind and heart, the thoughts and emotions), Buddhi (the intellect; intelligence), Chitta (the memory; recollection powers; discriminatory intellect; the ability to concentrate and pay attention), and Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness). [Like the sky element, these qualities formed were the subtlest ones in creation. Again, like the sky element, they couldn’t be seen independently but only in the context of other elements. For example, the same Mana and Buddhi appear to be different in different creatures. No two individuals will have the same level of wisdom and intelligence. It will depend on a variety of other factors just like the sky showing different colours depending upon numerous factors such as moisture, dust particles and other impurities, presence of clouds, angle of sunlight etc.]

The ‘wind’ or air (Vayu) element has five subtle divisions or forms---Samaan (that wind which controls circulation in the body), Udaan (that helps in upliftment of the soul; it helps the body to get up from a reclining position; it moves up inside the body), Vyan (that which pervades throughout the body maintaining equilibrium), Apaana (that wind which is inhaled and passes down the body; helps in ingestion, digestion and excretion of food), and Pran (the vital wind that is regarded as the spark of life inside the otherwise dead and inane gross body; exhaled breath). [The same wind/air element serves different functions in the body.]

The ‘fire’ (Agni) element takes the following subtle forms---the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. [These are the organs of perception in the body and are obviously gross in form, but the fire element resides in a subtle form in them. This stanza means that the fire element resides in these five external organs of the body to keep them active and

energised. That is why they feel ‘warm’ to touch. When a man dies, the fire element leaves the body, and consequentially these organs feel ‘cold’ to touch.]

The ‘water’ (Apaha) produced the following five Tanmatras, or senses, such as hearing (pertaining to the ears), touch (pertaining to skin), sight (pertaining to eyes), taste (pertaining to tongue), and smell (pertaining to nose). [This stanza indicates the flow of blood in all the organs of the body, because it is the blood flowing in the veins and capillaries along with the sensations flowing in the nerves present in the body that these organs are able to carry on the functions of perceptions specific to them. Blood is a fluid and it is one of the forms in which the water element lives in the body to keep it alive and active.]

The ‘earth’ (Prithivi) element produced the following---voice (or mouth), hands, legs, anus and genitals. [These are the organs of action. The earth element is the grossest of the five elements in symbolic terms of level of erudition, wisdom and intellectual development, and the ability to think and discriminate. This is because it is the heaviest element and marked by a propensity to sink and settle at the lower level instead of rising high and up like the air or fire elements. It has a tendency to pull down instead of giving a lift upwards. That is why these organs where the earth is a dominant element can’t think for themselves, and are regarded as the grossest in the hierarchy of organs in the body. They are under the command and control of the mind-intellect as well as the five organs of perceptions. They depend upon their higher brethren to functions.] [5].

[Note--¹According to the philosophy of Vedanta, the *Akash* or space element referred above is the various spaces that encircle and envelop the entity that gives the sky or space its nomenclature. According to Vedanta, there are five types of subtle skies or spaces called ‘Panchakash’. These five subtle skies encircle the following — (i) food ‘sheath’ called the Anna Maye Kosh, (ii) vital air sheath or the Pran Maye Kosh, (iii) mental sheath or the Manomye Kosh, (iv) intellect sheath or the Vigyan Maye Kosh, (v) and bliss sheath or Anand Maye Kosh. These have been explained below in Section 3 of this book.

Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or ‘Akash’, which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing.

That is, these three forms of the skies, the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

This verse outlines how the different parts of the body were formed from the primary elements in their descending order of subtlety, and ascending order of grossness.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 6 = Gyan (truthful and incisive knowledge of reality), Sankalp (resolve, volition, determination, vows, aspirations), Nischaya (firmness of resolve and determination; certainty, surety, lack of doubt and ambiguity), Anusandhan (research and analysis; deep insight into anything), and Abhimaan (ego, pride, vanity, haughtiness,

arrogance and hypocrisy)---these activities of a creature are ‘done’ (instigated, inspired, provoked) by the sky or space element, and they are the objects of the ‘Antahakaran’. [That is, they are the objects on which the discriminatory intellect applies its wisdom and powers of discrimination. It is the subtle body of the creature consisting of the mind and intellect as well as the heart that inspires and propels it to make various determinations and have different aspirations based on its experience and information. The creature’s intellect directs it towards any action when it is reasonably certain that it would be successful in its endeavours. First it makes a resolve, then it researches about it, is certain of its ability to successfully accomplish it based upon the knowledge gathered, and this fills it with pride of its capabilities and potentials. Since the ‘sky’ element controls his intellect, wisdom, mind, heart and the sense of pride as described in verse no. 5, it is deemed to have sway over the above virtues and characteristics of a creature.]

Samikaran (to strike a balance or maintain equilibrium in the body), Unnayan (to lift up, elevate, levitate, enhance), Grahan (to accept, hold, imbibe, grasp, catch, acknowledge), Srawan (to hear; the vibrations produced by sound in the ear), and Shwas (breath; inhalation and exhalation)---these are the activities done or controlled by the ‘wind’ element. They are the objects of the vital wind called Pran. [As described above in verse no. 5, all these functions of the body are controlled by the various vital winds present inside the body of the creature. The Pran is considered the principle wind in as much as all other winds have any relevance only till the time the creature is alive; they lose their importance and relevance when the Pran makes its exit from the body and the creature dies. This fact has been emphasised in a number of Upanishads, such as Chandogya, Brihad-Aranyaka amongst others.]

The various senses of perceptions of the body, such as to hear the spoken words or the sense of hearing, to feel anything or the sense of touch, to see anything or the sense of sight, to determine the taste of anything or the sense of taste, and to smell anything or the sense of smell—all these are the activities of the ‘fire’ element (because it is the fire element in the form of life-giving warmth, energy, stamina, vigour and vitality inherent in this element that enables the organs of perception to function and to put to effect these perceptions, as is obvious when we consider the case of a dead body which does not perceive anything). These perceptions or senses come under the jurisdiction of the organs of perception (such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose respectively). All these senses of perception depend upon the ‘water’ element. [This is because the water element keeps the body well nourished and healthy to felicitate the proper functioning of these organs of perceptions. Water is present in many forms in the body, such as blood, lymph, mucous, enzymes, hormones etc., or all parts of the body that are not solids or dry like the bones and the skin. Therefore, the role that water plays in the body can never be underestimated.]

And finally, to speak, to give, to move, to excrete or eliminate the waste, and procreation or sexual gratification are the activities of the ‘earth’ element. These are the activities falling within the domain of the organs of action (such as the mouth, hand, leg, anus and genitals respectively).

The subjects pertaining to the organs of perception and organs of action are basically the same as those of the five ‘Tanmatras’ (the sense of various perceptions) and the five ‘Prans’ (vital wind forces) respectively. [The subjects pertaining to the organs of perceptions and the perceptions themselves are obviously the same. For instance, the eye

has the perception of sight, and both have the same target—any object that has a physical shape, a form, a colour which can be ‘seen’. The ears and the perception of hearing also likewise have the target—any sound that can be heard. This applies to the other organs as well. Similarly, the five organs of action and the five vital winds are inter-related. These five organs function normally as long as the five winds perform normally. Should any of the winds fail to carry out its functions in a proper way, the corresponding organ would malfunction. For instance, if the Apaana wind dithers, the anus malfunctions. If the Prana fails, the speech becomes incoherent and the man stutters/stammers. If the Udana wind loses its strength, the legs won’t lift the body. And so on and so forth.]

Similarly, memory, intelligence and thought (Chitta) as well as ego and pride (Ahankar) are inherent and an integral part of the intellect and mind (Buddhi and Mana) respectively. [The intellect is wise, erudite and enlightened, and therefore it does not have any sense of ego and pride, while the mind is under the influence of the information that it receives from the various sense organs of perception and responses of the organs of action, and therefore it feels proud of its capabilities and astounding potentials. Refer also to Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, Section 3-7.] [6].

[Note—There should be no confusion about what is being said in this verse. Basically it says that all the different functions of the body—from the subtlest such as functioning of the intellect, right up to the grossest such as the elimination of waste matter through the excretory organs—are manifestations of the inherent virtues to perform specific functions that are present in the five primary elements that came into existence. At the same time as controlling the functioning of the different units of the body, these elements themselves formed the body. So, since the body is a composite form of these five elements, the functions carried out by the different organs along with the unique characters, temperaments and inherent nature exhibited by the creature would indicate the proportion of the element that plays a dominant role in this creature’s personal profile or personality as well as the functioning of each unit of its body. This is the reason why we have such a complex zoological kingdom where any one given class of animal has no resemblance with the other. Thus, by analyzing the characteristic features and behaviour of any given creature or even the functioning of any given unit of its body, we can deduce which of the five elements is dominant there.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 7 = Avakash (literally meaning vacant space, where there is no activity; retirement), Vidhut (to move, to shake, to remove), Darshan (to see, to visualise, to have a glimpse, to perceive), Pindikaran (to combine everything into a homogenous rounded mass or ball or a spherical object to remove distinctions between different things), and Dharna (to bear, to have firm faith, conviction and belief)---these are the subtle forms that are the subjects of the five Tanmatras in their subtlest form (such as the sky, wind, fire, water and earth elements)¹ [7].

[Note--¹To understand the import of this verse, we must take into account verse no. 5 and 6 above. The *five Tanmatras* are the five senses of perception (hear, smell, taste, touch and see), and they all depend on the various organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, skin and eye respectively) which are the gross manifestations of the five basic elements of creation (sky, wind, water, earth and fire respectively). The ears hear sound from the vast space surrounding the creature; the wind element enables one to move around; the fire element lights up the realm and enables the creature to see, while, at the same, time keeping the world warm, a factor most essential for life to thrive; the water element helps in dissolving everything uniformly

without distinction, mixing all the ingredients into a homogenous mass or dough out of which a ball can be made, which in turn symbolises the primordial egg from which the whole cosmos evolved in due course; and the earth element which bears the burden of the entire creation and acts as its ground or base or foundation.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 8 = Therefore, there are said to be twelve organs¹ through which the entire physical world has been revealed. The creation has been classified into three categories—Adhyatmic (the causal world pertaining to the Atma or spirit), Adhibhautic (the gross world visible around us on the earth), and Adhidaivic (the subtle world of the Gods).

There are twelve Gods such as the Moon, Brahma (the creator), Lokpals (the custodians of the different directions of the world), Vayu (the Wind God), the Sun, Varun (the Water God), Ashwini-kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and regarded in mythology as the Gods’ physician), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods; the controller of life giving rains), Upendra (Lord Vishnu, the sustainer), Prajapati (the care takers of the subjects of creation created by Brahma and responsible for carrying the process of creation forward), and Yam (the Death God and who judges the creature after death).

They are the patron Gods of the twelve organs and they have their subtle abode in the twelve principal Naadis (nerves or veins or ducts or channels) of the body associated with these organs. These twelve Gods are also called the subtle parts of Pran or the vital wind which is synonymous with life or the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature². A person who is acquainted with the twelve organs, their gross and subtle forms as well as their patron Gods, is indeed considered to be learned, sagacious, wise and scholarly [8].

[Note—(1)¹The *twelve organs* referred to in the above verse are the following:-- the 6 organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue, skin) + 6 organs of action (mouth, hand, leg, anus, genital) + heart + mind = 12.

(2) ²The *Gods* are the personifications of the various forces of Nature that govern life. Since the Atma is an embodiment of life as well as a synonym of life, these so-called Gods are an intrinsic and integral part of the Atma. They cannot be separated from the Atma even as the latter also cannot be separated from the former. Pran and the Atma are also synonyms; both coexist in the body of the creature, and its life depends equally upon both. Whereas the Atma is pure consciousness, the Pran is the vital wind, but the term consciousness is synonymous with life as much as the word Pran. Hence, these twelve Gods represent the Atma performing different functions in their forms; the Atma exercises control over the entire creation in its manifestation as these twelve Gods. The Atma is a composite of these Gods.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 9 = [Now the sage describes how the five basic elements of creation called the ‘Panch Bhuts’ (the sky, air, fire, water, earth) are used in practice to create a perception of the world.]

The space is filled with air or wind. The latter has five forms—Samaan, Vyan, Udaan, Apaana and Pran. The Samaan wind helps in the perception of the spoken word in the form of sound heard through the ears. This sound or word is established in the space of the sky. All that is to be known or learnt by the intellect is done by means of hearing about it, and the organ that does it is the ear. The ear hears or picks up every bit of sound

that it comes in contact with. It treats all sounds equally, and does not shut-off one in preference to the other. If the ears are closed, all sounds are eliminated. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the ears are the playing field or the field of activity of the Samaan wind. Since sound travels in open space, the importance of sky element is obvious if the ears have to hear anything. This Samaan wind coordinates the ears and the intellect because the latter would base its decisions on what it hears with the aid of the ears.

The Vyan wind is discerned as the sense of touch and is felt through the medium of the skin. It is established in the air around the body in the space filled with the wind element. The hands are especially empowered to feel this wind (i.e. the hands can 'feel' a thing better than any other part of the body—such as it being soft or hard, the feel of the texture of the object, and feel whether it is hot or cold etc.). The Mana (mind) gets the 'feel' or 'hang' of the world around it by 'feeling' it or 'touching' it with the hand. To get a better idea of anything, we tend to lift it and turn it over in our hands. The Mana derives greater degree of satisfactions when it holds and feels a thing than merely hearing about it or seeing it. The sense of touch and feel as perceived by the skin of the hand is a notch better than that perceived from any other part of the body. The Vyan wind coordinates the working of the Mana and the perception of touch as exhibited by the hand and skin. This is because this wind is uniformly distributed all over the area where the body is covered by the skin.

The Udaan wind helps the eyes to see things that have a definite shape, size, contours and colour. This wind enables the legs to move and is established in the fire element (i.e. the energy required to move the body is predominantly located in the legs). When the eye sees something attractive, it inspires the legs to take the body there, and the legs move only when the Udaan wind wants. So, this wind coordinates the working of the eyes and the legs.

The Apaana wind helps the tongue to perceive the sense of taste, and it is present in the lower organs of the body (i.e. the alimentary canal) in the form of the water element. The water element predominates those places where this wind has a major role to play (as is evident from the fact that the tongue is always moist and it needs saliva to taste anything; the digestive juices present in the intestines are in liquid form; the semen is a fluid as is the urine, the latter two being the produce of the genitals and the excretory organs which ironically have a common exit; the stool in the rectum is also semi-solid, indicating the presence of water). If the Apaana wind and the water element do not work in a coordinated fashion, the intake of food, its digestion and excretion would be badly affected. Besides it, if the body does not get proper nourishment, its memory and ability to focus on the job at hand, to study and contemplate etc. take a beating. The attention is diverted and a man gets restless if the flatus gets incarcerated in the intestines; the man feels bloated and hypochondriac. In other words, the functioning of the 'Chitta', i.e. the ability of the mind to stay attentive and fix its self on the job at hand, the perception of taste which enables one to enjoy the food eaten and therefore in better secretion of digestive juices, the movement of food in the intestines and its excretion, as also the production of semen (genital fluids), its movement and its proper implantation in the female organs—all depend upon and are coordinated by the Apaana wind.

Finally, the Pran wind reveals itself in the nose (as breath) and helps it to exhibit the ability to smell. Its other habitat is the anus where the earth element is present in the

form of faecal matter (stool). The Pran is synonymous with life as also is food, because life cannot be sustained without either the Pran or the food. Food is produced from earth. Therefore, food and earth are to be treated equally as the fifth element. A wise and erudite person is one who knows this. The nose is able to smell two genres of smells—one that is pleasant such as the aroma of delicious food or the sweet fragrance of flowers, and the other that is foul such as the stinking wind coming out of the anus. The ability to smell is controlled by the Pran wind (breath present in the nose), while at the same time this Pran is a metaphor for the life-sustaining basic ingredients and nourishment present in any food item. Food is grown on earth. The gross part of food from which all nutrients have been extracted by the body accumulates in the rectum. Hence, this food, as excreta, is called ‘night soil’ or ‘night earth’, where the word ‘night’ would stand for something from which life has been removed or extracted, something that is gross in nature. Since such excreta (which is food minus Pran) accumulates in the anus and rectum, the latter are said to be dominated by the earth element simply because food has its natural habitat in the earth. Pran is the wind that coordinates the functioning of life in this creation through the medium of the food, and it lives on earth in the form of all life forms that exist.] [9].

“Canto 2, verse no. 1 = In the above context, there is a Shloka (a verse) propounding the doctrine that says all the elements –such as the Antakaran (the subtle sky), wind, fire, taste (the water element) and anus (the earth element)-- have sixteen ‘Kalaas’ or fractions or subtle parts each. The first half of any given one element and the different fractions of other elements in varying proportions are clumped together to form the various gross organs of the creature [1].

[Note—Each primary Bhut or element is divided into sixteen parts or fractions. These elements form the organs of the body. Therefore, one half of each organ would be deemed to consist of half part of the principal element, i.e. eight parts of the principal element, and the other half is made up of different fractions taken from the remaining four elements as outlined below in verse no. 2.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 2 = Each gross organ has one half of it made up of the principal subtle element that dominates that particular organ, and the remaining half consists of one fourth fraction of the second half of each of all the remaining subtle elements [2].

[Note--- For example, verse no. 9 of canto 1 tells us that the anus has the earth element in predominance. It means that the anus, which is the organ of excretion, has one half part made of the earth element while the other half consists of one fourth part of the second half of the other remaining four elements—viz. space, air, water and fire. That is, if we analyse the constituent ingredients of the anus which is deemed to be divided into 16 parts, we will find that half of it, i.e. 8 parts, consist of the earth element, while the other half of 8 parts consists of $\frac{1}{4}^{\text{th}}$ of one half part of each of the remaining four elements. That means, the second half of the anus consists of 2 fractions ($\frac{1}{4}$ of 8 = 2) each of the sky, air, fire and water elements. Thus the configuration of the anus would in effect be as follows—8 parts earth + 2 parts sky + 2 parts air + 2 parts fire + 2 parts water = 16 parts.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 3 = The fraction or part of the subtle elements revealed in the form of the gross organs of the upper half of the body of the creature should be treated as subtler as compared to the lower half which is grosser in nature. This way, all that exists consists of both the subtle and the gross aspects of creation mixed together in varying degrees of

subtlety and grossness. There is no clear-cut demarcation or dividing line. The transition from one element to another is imperceptible and smooth [3].

[Note—Its easy to imagine this scenario. If we mix two or more liquids of different colours and density in a jar, stir the mixture vigorously and let the jar stand, the heavier or grosser liquid will settle at the bottom while the lightest liquid will rise up to the top. The liquid with medium density will occupy the central part. Transition from one colour to another will be also smooth and gradual, until the time the whole mixture acquires a new identity of its own which is very different from the original ingredients that were mixed. There will be no clear-cut and sharp dividing line to separate one liquid from the other, and the slightest movement or jerk of the jar would disturb the equilibrium between the different liquids and mix them all up. If we extend this example to the earth, we will understand why the earth consists of so many layers or strata. The only difference is that the earth is solid and its strata are fixed as compared to the liquids in the jar.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 4 = Hence all the ‘Bhuts’ (elements) depend upon each other for their existence. Even the grossest element earth consists of the other more subtle elements as described in verse no. 2 and 3 above. Though the earth appears to be primarily gross and inanimate, it nevertheless has a subtle aspect, a conscious principle that is inherently and intrinsically present in it. That is, ‘consciousness’ is as integral part of earth as it is of the animate creatures that inhabit the earth, move over it, reproduce over it and sustained by it [4].

[Note—The fire element is an integral part of earth, and so is the water, air and sky. Fire is synonymous with life, and so are the other elements. It is a well established fact that earth is the foundation upon which the whole of the edifice of the visible creation rests and finds sustenance. The earth can actually foster life, and it is only possible if it has this potential ‘consciousness’ in the form of all the five elements. Only that which is ‘living and inherently conscious’ can sustain and foster intelligent life. Not only fire but all other elements such as water, air and sky need earth to have their existence made meaningful.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 5 = It is because the earth has subtle consciousness (as described above that it is not fully gross and dead and inane, and neither is it inert and inactive), it produces or creates or exhibits the myriad, multidimensional signs of life, such as creation or production of herbs, food, all the four forms of life¹, the juices (or the nourishing and refreshing fluids that create and sustain life), blood, flesh, bones, stomach, sperms and the like [5].

[Note---¹All the four forms of life on the earth have their origin in a *panda*, which is an embryo shaped roughly like a rounded ball, and hence the name ‘pinda’ meaning a rounded mass of any matter. That is why the earth is ‘round’ like a ball or Pinda. It is an embryo that harbours life in all its vibrant forms. The four forms of life based on this earth and dependent on it are the following:--(a) Swadej or those born from sweat, such as lice, bacteria etc. (b) Andaj or those born from an egg, such as birds, (c) Udjbhij or those born from seeds, such as plants, and (d) Jarayuj or those born from an embryo inside the womb of the mother, such as animals and humans.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 6 = The union or clubbing together of these basic elements in different ratios and proportions results in the possibility of creation of so many ‘cells’

which are harbingers of different forms of life that the basic elements assume. The ‘Anna-maye Pinda’ (the food sheath or that cell or microcosmic body which is based on the food element) is present in the region of the navel¹ [6].

[Note--¹That is the reason why an embryo developing in a mother’s womb draws its nourishment through a duct called placenta attached to the navel of the foetus. This placenta is the food pipe of the developing creature.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 7 = In the centre of this ‘Anna-Pinda’ is the heart which is shaped like a lotus flower having a stem. In the core of this heart is present that ‘conscious Lord’ (the Atma or soul or pure consciousness) in whom the element of Ahankar (pride) that he is a ‘Karta’ (doer of deeds) is to be found. That is, the conscious factor present at the core of a creature’s existence is defined as the Lord of the creature because that consciousness called ‘Chetna’ is the only conscious and enlightened authority and the highest seat of power that controls and drives the rest of the setup. This authority is the true identity of the creature and is also known as the Atma. Though basically wise, this Atma or the virtual Lord of the creature erroneously thinks, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, that it does the various deeds and takes actions through the medium of the body. This conception or idea that it is the one that exclusively does everything, that it does this or that, or that it is the only entity capable, competent and authorised to do this and that, fills it with false pride and ego. It thinks ‘I am a doer’. This is Ahankar. It makes it arrogant and haughty [7].

[Note---It would be noted here that this happens when ignorance and delusions, called Maya, cast a dark shadow upon the creature. By the word ‘creature’, the true identity is referred to. The situation can be compared to a man who sees the world through a tainted glass; his vision of the world would be influenced by the colour of the glass. It would not matter if he is learned or a stupid; he would not be able to even realise that he is being taken for a ride when he decides that the world has such and such colour (character). So when the Atma is under the influence of ignorance, it loses sight of the Truth and Reality.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 8 = The seed for this Ahankar, or the root cause from which ego, pride, vanity and arrogance sprouts or generates, lies in ‘Moha’ (ignorance, delusions, false attachments). It is a negative trait symbolising a sphere of darkness induced by ignorance, and is very gross by nature. The throat is its special habitat though it is present everywhere in the world, clumped to other elements that constitute it [8].

[Note—A man’s arrogant and haughty nature becomes evident when he speaks arrogantly and haughtily. That is why it is said that a foolish and ignorant man reveals himself when he speaks, and not if he keeps quiet, because his speech generated in his throat highlights the level of his stupidity.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 9 = The most exalted citadel which is said to be the supreme habitat of the blissful Atma is in the head (i.e. in the intellect and mind). It is very powerful and it is that which throws light to illuminate the world. [That is, it is the mind which makes the Atma aware of the world.] [9].

[Note—The Atma is usually depicted as having its abode in the lotus-like heart. The head is, on the other hand, said to be the abode of Brahm. These two sites have great symbolic importance. While the Atma may be sentimental or emotional as it lives in the heart

which is characterised by these virtues, the Brahm is never so; it is always wise and rational as is indicated by its abode in the head (brain) where the intellect and mind also have their seat. Brahm and Atma are however synonymous with each other; they are the two sides of the same coin. What Brahm is at the macrocosmic level, the Atma is at the micro level. So, while Atma is blissful, the supreme Atma is more so, it is more blissful in its form as Brahm. This observation means that if the heart relies upon the guidance of the mind-intellect, the creature would find peace and true happiness.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 10 = The ‘Jagrat’, or the waking state of consciousness, dominates the worldly life of a creature and is found everywhere around it. The ‘Swapna’, or the dream state, has a subtle presence in the former. [This is because (a) what is visible in this world while a creature is awake is actually like a mirage in a desert; it is false, illusionary and deluding; it is like a dream in the true sense, and (b) stimuli received by the brain while a creature is awake acts like a data bank for the memory, or the sub-conscious, upon which a creature’s dreams are based.]

The other two states—deep sleep and Turiya—have nothing to do with this gross world because in these two states of existence, the mind-intellect cease to function and interfere with the pure consciousness [10].

“Canto 2, verse no. 11 = In all the habitats (i.e. in all the places and all the bodies of all the creatures), this Atma, which is like Shiva (literally one that is pure, holy, auspicious, wise, enlightened, truthful and eternal), is uniformly and universally present in the world as the all-pervading, omnipresent and omniscient Being even as juice is uniformly and equally distributed inside a fruit [11].

[Note—In other words, the pure consciousness is equally present in the humblest of creature such as an insect as it is present in the mighty elephant. It is universally present in all living entities in creation, without any exception. This is like the uniform distribution of sap or juice in any given ripe fruit; it cannot be said that one part of it has a greater density of juice than the other part.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 12 = The ‘Anna-maye Kosh’ (the food sheath) encloses the other four sheaths of a creature. The consciousness assumes a form which concurs with the relevant sheath. This concurrence makes the supreme and uncorrupt Atma appear to be like that particular sheath [12].

[Note---(1) The various sheaths that cover the Atma, the individual’s soul, act like a veil around it. Briefly, the ‘food sheath’ is the outermost layer. It encloses the following four sheaths--(a) vital air sheath, (b) mental sheath, (c) intellect sheath, and (d) bliss sheath. The Atma is located at the core of the bliss sheath. (2) The Atma, which is the ‘true self’ of the creature and its real identity, interacts with the external world as long as the creature lives in it. In this process, the Atma has to go through these sheaths because they intervene between the Atma and the world. Each sheath or veil or covering reflects its character and casts its shadow upon the Atma, thereby making the latter appear tinged or tainted with those characteristics which are typical for that particular sheath/covering/veil. Its like looking through a coloured glass; the sight is bound to be affected by the glass’s colour.]

“Canto 2, verse nos. 135 = The ‘earth element’ is said to be present in the body from the sole of the feet up to the knees. The earth is visualised as having four corners, a yellow

colour, and is endowed with a hardness which is equivalent to that of Vajra, the hardest material in existence (and therefore was used by Indra, the king of Gods, to make his weapon from). [135].

“Canto 2, verse nos. 136 = The wind should be restrained as described above (in verse no. 92-112 dealing with Pranayam) for a period of approximately two hours or ‘Panch-Ghati’ (which is 5 x 24 minutes = 120 minutes) while focusing or concentrating the attention on the earth element mentioned earlier (in verse no. 135). The ‘water element’ is present in the body from the knee joint to the waist area (the lower abdomen) [136].

“Canto 2, verse nos. 137 = The ‘water element’ is visualised in the shape of a crescent moon, is coloured white and resembles the simmering silver. The aspirant should hold his breath (i.e. do Pranayam) for four hours or ten Ghatis (10 x 24 = 240 minutes, or 4 hours), all the while meditating upon the water element [137].

“Canto 2, verse nos. 138-141 = The ‘fire element’ is said to be present in the middle part of the body around the navel and lower abdomen region. It has the contours of leaping and swaying flame, and is red hot like vermilion. The aspirant should fix his attention on the fire element while holding the breath for six hours or fifteen Ghatis (i.e. 15 x 24 minutes = 360 minutes = 6 hours).

The ‘wind element’ is present from the navel region up to the nostrils. It is shaped like an altar or a dais, its colour resembles that of smoke or haze. This potentially powerful wind element should be meditated upon by holding breath inside (i.e. the Kumbhak phase—see verse no. 98) (138-140) for a period of eight hours or twenty Ghatis (i.e. 20 x 24 = 480 minutes = 8 hours).

The part of the body from the nostrils up to the top of the head at the spot called ‘Brahm Randhra’ (literally the hair-like slit or the miniscule hole through which Brahm entered the body at the time of creation and through which an accomplished ascetic’s Pran is supposed to exit at the time of his death—) is the area where the ‘sky element’ predominates. It has the shade of azure /light blue (141). [138-141]”

(iii) Shukla Yajur Veda’s *Paingal Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 2-3, 5-8—

“Canto 2, verse no. 2 = Sage Yagyavalkya replied to sage Paingal, ‘Listen attentively and carefully. I shall endeavour to describe to you the details about the origin of the three types of bodies called the gross, the subtle and the causal in which the Lord revealed himself, along with the fundamental nature and form of or the difference between a creature and the Ishwar. This would help you to understand the relationship between the creature or Jiva, and the supreme Lord of that creature known as Ishwar.

The supreme creator or Lord called ‘Isha’ took fractions of the five primary elements (i.e. sky, air, water, fire and earth) that he had created first to create the gross bodies of the individual creature as well as the gross body of the entire creation¹. [In other words, the same ingredients were used by him to mould the individual creature’s body as well as the rest of the creation. This observation has a great import—although no two creatures are alike, and though the external form and shape and size and colour and contour of any two individual creatures might be different, but they are fundamentally the

same. When it is extended to the rest of the creation, then the notion of non-duality, uniformity and universality in creation is easy to understand.]

The 'earth' element was used to create the skull, skin, intestines, bones, flesh and nails. From the 'water' element he created blood, urine, saliva and sweat etc. From the 'fire' element he produced hunger, thirst, heat, infatuations, passions, lust and sexual instincts etc. From the 'wind or air' element he crafted the virtue of 'motion and activity' such as walking, sitting, getting up, going places, breathing, speaking etc. And from the 'sky' element were produced such traits as Kaam (worldly desires, passions, yearnings etc.) and Krodh (anger, vehemence, wrathfulness, short temper etc.).

The gross body so produced from these fundamental primary elements naturally had all the traits that were inherently present as an integral part and defining attributes of these individual elements. Therefore, the body of the creature exhibited all the attributes and characteristics present in the ingredients used to make up its body. The body that the creature assumed further depended upon the cumulative effects of the deeds which the creature had done in the past². Since the body took a birth in as much it had 'come into being' and was 'not eternal and without a birth', it had to pass through various stages of change and development (i.e. evolution) such as childhood, etc., and had to suffer from their accompanying sufferings (2).

[Note—¹By saying that Brahm had created the five basic elements and subtly entered them to empower them with their characteristic qualities it is meant that these elements were bestowed with some fundamental qualities which were deemed most essential and necessary to conceive and implement, then develop, nourish and sustain, and finally close the process of creation as envisioned by Brahm. It was like a delegation of his majestic powers by Brahm, thereby vesting these entities with those powers and necessary authority that were deemed absolutely essential to implement the Lord's ideas of creation.

Thus, the 'earth' was given the virtue of fertility and assigned with the task of providing nourishment and sustenance to the creation as well as to act as a base and foundation for all the forthcoming creation; it was vested with a vast and inexhaustible reservoir of natural resources so as to provide the creation with the necessities of daily life in abundance. The 'water' was vested with the power of digesting and then equally distributing nourishment to all the parts of creation; of providing the vital sap and nectar for fostering life. The 'fire' element obviously was assigned the task of giving required energy, heat and light. The 'air or wind' element provided the breathing and the gases needed for life; it helped in movement and carrying of information as sound waves. The 'sky' element acted as the great cosmic womb in which the entire creation would be conceived, live and finally find its rest.

To ensure that none of these elements got the better of the other, the cosmic creator ensured a fine balance by neutralizing one with the other. For example, 'fire' had its antidote in water and air (because no matter how fierce the fire is, it can be doused by water and blown away by wind); the 'water' element had its antidote in fire and earth (because the fire can evaporate water and make it vanish, while the water vanishes in the bowl of the earth in a desert); the 'air or wind' had its nemesis in the fire and sky (because even though the air is static it is forced to move when heated, and the strongest of storms vanish in the endless bowls of the sky); the 'earth' element has found its balancing factor in the sky, water and fire elements (because at the end of its tenure the earth would disintegrate and vanish in the sky, the earth is but a tiny dot in the deep dark recesses of the cosmos; at the time of the great dooms-day deluge the earth would be submerged in water, and the fire can scorch earth and render it uninhabitable); and

finally the 'sky' also has its antidote in the rest of the four elements (because the sky symbolising space cannot and does not exist in solid rocks or earth, a block of ice or water, in a fierce fire because that fire occupies all space to burn and would chase away every trace of air inside it, and inside specific gases which are forms of air).

Refer also to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 1/1-9, 2/1-19, and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1.

²This again assumes that the creature was ignorant of its exalted pure form and essential nature as the eternal Atma which resided in its earlier body, that this Atma was neutral and was not at all involved in doing any deed, so there was no question of it getting involved in deeds and then having to assume a body depending upon what it did in its previous life. Herein lay the secret that the Upanishads try to unravel. That creature's Atma had erroneously presumed that the body in which it resided at that time was its identity, it was recognised by the body, it got too enamoured with its deeds and wanted to enjoy them and their results because it found them enticing. This led to its downfall even as the supreme transcendental Brahm had himself been taken for a ride when he became infatuated with the world he had created as has been clearly stated in canto 1, verse nos. 7-12 and explained as notes appended therewith. So if the worldly engrossments did not spare the creator, then how can it spare an ordinary creature? Further, since the individual creature is an image of the creator or Brahm himself, by explaining the concept with the help of the creature, the Upanishadic seer seeks to explain the large picture at the cosmic level.]

"Canto 2, verse no. 3 = After that, the supreme creator collected those parts of the individual elements which had the 'Raja Guna' (the second of the three fundamental qualities that are inherently present in the entire creation and determine its characters and specific nature) in predominance. This he divided into four segments, and took three of these to create 'Pran' (the vital winds). These are five in number—viz. Pran, Apan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan. Similarly, the sub-Prans are called Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay.

The main or chief Pran (breath or the life infusing vital wind) has its seat in the following sites—heart, lower buttocks (in the Muladhar Chakra which is a subtle energy centre present at the lower end of the body near the anus and genitals), navel (abdomen), throat and other parts of the body.

Thereafter, he used the remaining fourth part to create the various organs of action (mouth, hands, legs, and the excretory and procreative organs). These five organs have as their functions the following—speech (is the function of mouth), receiving (is the function of hands), movement (is the function of legs), excretion (is the function of the excretory organs such as anus and kidneys), and enjoyments of pleasure (is the function of the sexual organs).

Similarly, he collected those parts of the individual elements which had the 'Sata Guna' (the first of the three fundamental qualities) in predominance. This he divided into four segments, and took three of these to create 'Anthakaran'¹ (the inner self; the subtle body). It had the following components—Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (the faculty of concentration, paying attention and memory; knowledge and sub-conscious), Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) and their attendant Vrittis (inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body). [That is, the basic nature of a person and the way he would react to a given circumstance, the way he would deal, behave and interact with the world, the way

he would interpret things, the way he thinks, the things that would appeal to him and the things he would abhor, etc.—that is, the overall personality of the creature, all depend upon the mental setup tinged with the fundamental character traits that are firmly ingrained in him.]

These components that formed the subtle body had the following characteristic objects that they pursue—Sankalps (making vows promises, having volitions, aspirations and firm determinations etc.—this was the function of the Mana), Nishya (to have predetermined conceptions about anything or situation-- this was the exclusive job of Vrittis), Smaran (to remember and recollect—this was the function of the Chitta), Abhiman (to have pride and arrogance, to be haughty and hypocrite—this was the exceptional domain of Ahankar), and Anusandhaan (research and analysis, quest and enquiry, to determine and arrive at conclusions, to debate and research, to discuss and deduce—this was the function of the Buddhi).

These entities have their seats in the throat, mouth, navel, heart and the mid-point between the two eyebrows. [It is obvious how it happens. A man uses his mouth to express his mind, his thoughts as well as to show off his ego and pride. Throat and mouth are equally important for the purpose of speaking and gloating over one's acquisitions and successes. The heart is emotional, and its involvement makes a man passionate about his ideas. The navel is the center from where all the Naadis (nerves) fan out in the body, enabling the creature to remain sensitive, alert and active. The center of the eyebrow is the location of the intellect or Buddhi. This Buddhi stands for rational and intelligent thinking, as opposed to impulsive and sentimental responses of the heart. In other words, all the crucial subtle virtues that were manifestations of the Sata Guna in its various levels of subtlety had their symbolic locations at these five points in the body.]

The Lord used the remaining fourth part of the 'Sata-Guna' dominant elements to create the organs of perceptions—such as the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. The respective functions are—hearing, touching and feeling, seeing, tasting and smelling.

The following are the chief patron Gods or deities of all these organs—the presiding deities of the various directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Arka (the Water God), Pracheta (one of the ancient Prajapatis, the care-takers of the creation according to the Purans), Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and the medicine men of the Gods), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (the junior Gods who help Indra to carry on his functions), Mritu (the death God or Yam), Chandra (the Moon God), Vishnu (the sustainer), the four-headed Lord (Brahma the creator), and Shiva (the concluder of creation). [It should be noted that how Brahm utilised the third quality of Tama Guna has already been described in Canto 1, verse no. 7 of this Upanishad.] (3).

[Note—¹According to canto 1, verse no. 9 of this Paingalo-panishad, the *Anthakaran* has five dimensions. Please refer to the above verse no. 9 and its accompanying note in the previous canto.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 5 = In the aforesaid manner, the five organs of perceptions (eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of actions (hand, leg, mouth, genital and excretory), the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Samaana and Udaana), the five principal elements (earth, water, fire, air and sky), the four Anthakarans (see verse no.3), the four faults consisting of Kaam (worldly passions and lust for self gratification) etc. (the other faults being Krodh or anger, Lobh or greed, and Moha or attractions), Karma (deeds) and Tama

(lack of truthful knowledge symbolised by darkness) make up the body called a 'Puryashtak' or a cluster of eight abodes or cities. (5).

[Note--The body of a creature consists of these twenty eight fundamental units which are separate in themselves but are clubbed together to form a combined structure called the body of the creature that harbours the Atma or the pure conscious self of the creature in it. The creature lives in a 'state' or a country consisting of eight symbolic cities; the body of the creature is like a confederation of eight independent city-states that have a mutual understanding of cooperation with a segregation of responsibilities depending upon the competence of a particular unit to handle a job more efficiently. These eight cities are symbolised by the organs of perception + organs of action + vital winds + primary elements + Antahakaran + Kaam + Kordh + Tama = total of 8 cities. The cluster of individual components in each grouping, such as five units that compositely form the organs of action, can be likened to satellite townships or boroughs or shires that form independent administrative units of any large city but are invariably part and parcel of the same city.]

"Canto 2, verse no. 6 = On the instructions of the supreme transcendental Lord (Ishwar), the Viraat Purush subtly entered the individual creature and established himself in his Buddhi (intellect; discriminatory and reasoning faculty). With this status, the Viraat acquired the designation or epithet which would henceforth make him known as 'Vishwa'¹.

This 'Vishwa' (i.e. the cosmic Purush or the macrocosmic Lord of creation who represents the vast, all-inclusive body of Brahm at the cosmic level, and who has now taken up residence in the body of the individual creature which forms the basic unit of this mortal, visible world) has many names signifying the special qualities that it possesses. These names are the following--Vigyan-atma (the intelligent, wise, omniscient and enlightened soul), Chidabhas (the one who appears as the pure consciousness), Vishwa (visible world), Byavahaarik (one which interacts with the physical world), Jagrat (one who is awake in this visible world and sees it in actual practice), Sthul Dehabhimani (one who is proud of his gross body, though this is out of ignorance of his true identity which is the subtle and sublime Atma), and Karma-bhu (one who is engrossed in doing deeds on this earth)². (6).

[Note--¹The word *Vishwa* literally means the world at large; hence when the Viraat Purush metamorphosed into a creature, it was not that he was only limited to a single creature, but all the creatures in this creation had this Viraat element in them. So, 'Vishwa' form of Viraat Purush was the microcosmic profile of the macrocosmic entity that formed the gross body of the entire creation. It must be noted here that the word 'Vishwa' referring to the 'entire world' is actually meant to refer to the world inhabited by living beings of the earth and the Gods they praise. It does not include the entire universe, because the universe has an unimaginable dimension and is much, much vaster than the world in which we are immediately concerned. Therefore, the supreme entity which related to the gross and material world where living beings lived was called Vishwa, whereas the same entity when it related to the cosmos at large was called Viraat, meaning vast, colossus and immeasurable.

²We will note here that all these are the characteristic features of all mortal creatures that live on this earth. All have a mind no matter in which state of development it is, all have life and consciousness, all live in this visible world and interact with it, all are awake when they interact with the world, for otherwise they would be either asleep or

dead, all are proud of themselves and their bodies for they love their bodies more than anything else, and all do some or the other kind of deed.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 7 = On the instructions of the supreme Lord (Ishwar), the cosmic ‘Sutra Atma’ (the essential micro fine and microscopic entity that is the cosmic soul of the creation) entered the individual creature’s subtle body, and took up residence in its Mana (the subtle mind and heart complex). With this status, the Sutra Atma acquired the designation or epithet of being called ‘Taijas’¹.

This Taijas (i.e. the subtle body of the Atma of the creature) has the following names (which symbolise its chief characteristics)—Taijas (one that has energy and vive, vigour and potentials, strength and vitality, glory and radiance), Pratibhasik (that which reflects the glory, majesty, potentials, authority and magnificence of the principal) and Swakalpit (self created and imaginary)² (7).

[Note--¹The word *Taijas* refers to the fundamental energy, powers, glory, authority, vigour, strength and potentials that a creature possesses which empowers it to have its importance and relevance in this world. The Taijas is the subtle body where the mind is located. The mind and intellect apparatus is the most important instrument in the body of the creature because it is the mind and intellect that determines the basic thoughts and responses of the creature, which in turn determines the value that the individual has for the society. A stupid man is good for nothing and has no productive use. The mind and intellect literally ‘powers and energises’ the machine known as the creature, for it is the wisdom and intelligence that a man possesses which make him honourable and praiseworthy; it is the mind that drives the body and enables the creature to perform constructive activity. Even animals live and reproduce, but the man can think intelligently and is therefore considered more evolved in the evolutionary ladder. It is indeed the mind and the intellect that distinguishes an intelligent, thoughtful, learned, wise and skillful man from the blockheads and good-for-nothings. So the word ‘Taijas’, implying dynamism, glory and majesty, is most apt for the subtle body which houses the mind and intellect of the creature.

²The *mind and intellect* shows these virtues in abundance. Taijas has been described above. A wise and intelligent person’s fame and good name is established everywhere. The mind and intellect help a man acquire fame, glory, authority and majesty; they help him to gain honour and praise so much so that while he is alive, people seek him, and when he dies he is remembered for his prudent words, his erudition, his wisdom and his intelligence. This is his Pratistha.

Similarly, this world is a conception of the mind; it is an imagination of the mind. If the mind so decides, the very existence of the materialistic world would vanish, for the Upanishads have categorically stated in unambiguous terms that the mind is the cause of the ‘illusionary and deluding’ world. The latter is illusionary because it is like the water in a mirage in a hot desert; everyone knows that the water is not there but still a thirsty man is so much deluded by what he sees that he allows himself to run for it and eventually die due to exhaustion and dehydration. That is why those who are self-realised and Brahm-realised, those who know the secret truth behind the misleading external façade, treat this world as ‘non-existent’ even though they live a normal life in it and interact with it normally, but internally they remain non-involved and non-interested in it. Hence, the subtle body is given the epithet of ‘Swakalpit’, i.e. one that creates something out of its own free will.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 8 = Under the instructions of the supreme transcendental Lord (Isha), the entity which was characterised by such divine and glorious virtues as being without

any attributes, being indescribable, un-manifest and invisible—or was ‘Abyakta’, assumed for itself the attributes of Maya (i.e. invoked for itself the powers to create delusions and assume any form it wants) and entered the causal body of the individual creature, whereupon it came to be known as ‘Pragya’¹.

The other names of this entity which symbolically described some or the other attributes of it are the following—Pragya (something that is aware, wise, enlightened, erudite and sagacious), Avichinna (immutable, indivisible, eternal, unfractionable, one single whole, holistic), Parmarthik (spiritually inclined, divine, holy, pious, sublime and ethereal), and Sushpta-Abhimani (one who is in a blissful state and is proud of his blissfulness)² (8).

[Note--¹*Pragya* literally means something that is aware, knowledgeable, wise, enlightened, expert, skilled, erudite, sagacious and intelligent. The pure consciousness residing in the causal body of the creature has all these attributes; hence the supreme Brahm who lives in the causal body is called by this name of Pragya. In other words, this pure conscious Atma is the micro level counter part of Brahm, and therefore it reflects all the characteristic features possessed by Brahm—with the only difference that it is trapped in the body of the individual creature, whereas Brahm is present in the entire cosmos, uniformly defused throughout it. Why is Brahm trapped as the Atma in the causal body? This is explained in this verse which states that the supreme Lord entered the individual creature and took up residence in its causal body, and he was known as Pragya thereafter. The word ‘causal’ itself means something that is the cause of anything; it derives its name because of the fact that the Atma resides in its inner chambers, and this Atma is the supreme Brahm personified, and Brahm is the cause of all that exists!

It should be noted that in Canto 1, verse no. 11, 2nd last stanza, it was said that Brahm entered the body through the Brahm Randhra on the top of the head, whereas in the present verse it is said he entered the causal body. It implies that anything that is the ‘cause’ of any other thing to happen resides in the causal body. Since the mind (Mana) is the ‘cause’ of coming into being of the entire world, it is surely the abode of Brahm, and it is also correct to call it the ‘causal body of Brahm’.

²The Atma resides in the *causal body* of the creature. This body at the micro level is called Pragya because the Atma is wise, enlightened and erudite. At the macro level, the same entity is called Brahm, and the causal body is then known as Ishwar. The words used as epithets for this entity describe its characteristics.]

(iv) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Yogttatva Upanishad*, verse nos. 83-102—

“Verse no. 83-84 = Then the vital winds should be allowed to sneak inside the Shushumna Naadi (following its unclogging at its mouth at the Kundalini). This creates a thrilling and titillating sensation along this nerve. The mind should be focused on this process and follow it. The path of this Naadi is called the ‘Maha Path’, literally the grand avenue or highway. [This is because it is the grand ‘royal avenue’ or the highway of spiritualism that leads the ascetic to obtaining extreme bliss, ecstasy and self-realisation.]

An ascetic whose mind has virtually entered this Sushumna Naadi along with the vital winds (i.e. whose mind is concentrated on the eclectic, divine and mystical experience that is witnessed when the vital airs sneak up this nerve) is able to discern the distinctive forms of the five elements called the Panch Maha Bhuts and witness their personified forms in the shape of their patron deities or Gods called Panch Maha Devas.

[The five elements are earth, water, fire, air and sky. The human body is made up of these five elements. Under normal circumstances their presence is not discernible because the body is a complex of all of them. But even as an expert chemist can immediately visualise what colour and form the ingredients of a given compound had in their individual forms before they combined to form the present chemical compound, the wise ascetic is able to visualise or perceive the subtle differences between the five elements that constitute the body. The five principal deities called the ‘Panch Maha Devas’ are enumerated in the following verses.] (83-84).

“Verse no. 85 = The earth element is present as a dominant force from the foot to the knees. This earth has four directions, has a subtle yellow colour, and its seed Mantra is the Sanskrit letter (Varna) ‘La’ (as in ‘love’). [There is another connotation of this last part of the verse. The earth is said to contain large and infinite deposits of ‘salts’ as ores etc. The ocean is also salty. The last word of this verse, i.e. ‘Lavarna’, indicates this fact.] (85).

“Verse no. 86 = This is the place where the patron God of earth known as Brahma, the four armed and four headed¹ creator of creation, has his symbolic presence. [In other words, the earth is represented by the creator Brahma. This is because the entire living world as we know it is present here on earth and no other planet. The earth is the only known inhabited part of the entire creation where creatures having life and consciousness in them—right from the one-celled amoeba up to the most complex and intelligently developed ones like the humans—live.]

In order to witness his presence and have his (Brahma’s) subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the earth element along with its seed Mantra ‘La’ with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Brahma with the above features and with the complexion of gold (86).

[Note—¹There is a lot of symbolism in Hinduism, and if it is not properly understood in the correct context, a lot of hilarious, absurd and ridiculous situations arise, such as this Brahma with ‘four arms and four heads’. From a rational perspective, this is absolute rubbish. But if one were to understand the underlying symbolism and philosophy, things assume a rational meaning. The four heads of Brahma stand for the four Vedas he created or pronounced. These Vedas are the repositories of all knowledge that exist in this creation, and they are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva. The four arms stand for the four directions of the globe—the north, west, south and east. Since he is the creator of the visible creation, he is expected to take care of the entire earth because it is on earth that all living creatures created by him would live.

Therefore, his four arms are symbolic of his duty and ability of taking care of all the four corners of this living world, and the four Vedas indicate his all-encompassing and all-inclusive knowledge, wisdom and erudition that empower and enable him to do so.

The colour of gold indicates the colour of richness, prosperity and fertility. The egg’s yolk is also yellow because it harbours life and is rich with all essential nutrients needed by the nascent creation in its miniature form as the embryo.]

“Verse no. 87 = By concentrating one’s attention and doing meditation for a period of five Ghatis (two hours) in the above described manner, an ascetic is able to conquer or subdue the earth element; he becomes the Lord of this element. Such an ascetic never

dies due to some kind of shortcoming, fault, weakness or imperfection of the earth element in the body, or any injury caused by it to the body (87).

“Verse no. 88 = The water element has a predominant presence in the region from the knee to the anus. It is symbolically shaped like a half-moon, and its seed Mantra is ‘Vam’ (as in ‘vulgar + sum’) (88).

“Verse nos. 89-90 = This is the place of symbolic residence of the patron God of water known as Sri Narayan (Lord Vishnu), the four armed, exalted and high Lord who has a crown over his head¹ (indicative of his position as the Lord and emperor of the entire living world), who is pure as crystal (because he is untainted, without any blemish and cannot be demoted from his exalted stature inspite of the fact that he has to look after the routine chores of taking care of the mundane affairs of the multifaceted world ridden with corruption and blemishes of all imaginable types, being its sustainer, nourisher and protector), and who is wearing a yellow coloured cloth (symbolic of his ability to sustain, nourish and protect the world as its emperor).

In order to witness his presence and have his subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the water element along with its seed Mantra ‘Vam’ with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Narayan with the above features in his inner self. He should focus his attention and mind on this vision for a period of five Ghantis (two hours). This helps him in getting rid of all sins and their evil consequences (89-90).

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is the sustainer, nourisher and protector of all creatures. His four arms are indicative of this unique ability of his. Now, let us see what are those four units of creation which he is supposed to look after.

There are four types of creatures—viz. (i) ‘Andaj’ (those born from an egg, e.g. birds; (ii) ‘Swadej’ (those born from sweat and dampness, e.g. bacteria, fungi and lice; (iii) ‘Udbhij’ (those born from seeds, e.g. plants; and (iv) ‘Jaraayuj’ (those born from an embryo inside the womb, e.g. a man).

Then we have four classes of people in the society, called the four Varanas, and each has four phases, called the four Ashrams. The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

Finally, the four Ashrams are the following—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence

and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihastha—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called 'Ashramo-panishad' belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Thus we see that the four arms of Vishnu are indicative of his unique ability to protect the entire world of living creatures.]

“Verse no. 91 = After that, the ascetic need not fear from the water element in anyway, and neither would he die due to it (such as by drowning or by dehydration or thirst).

The fire element has its dominant presence from the anus to the heart region. [That is why all digestion of food and all the major internal organs that are responsible for the upkeep of the body and to continue the cycle of creation and prevent its extinguishing, such as the intestines, kidneys, the reproductive organs, the pancreas etc. are located in this region. It is here that the Kundalini is also located at the base of the spine. Without the presence of the heat in the lower part of the body, the vital airs cannot be heated and empowered to lift the body of an ascetic as has been described in verse no. 53-55 above. In practical life also we observe that the fire is always present at the lower end of the oven and not on its top.] (91).

“Verse no. 92 = The fire element has three corners (i.e. it is shaped symbolically like a triangle), has a red colour and the Sanskrit letter 'Ra' (as in 'run') as its seed or root Mantra. This fire should be stoked and ignited by injecting the air or wind element into it. [This is a common day phenomenon that the fire needs air to remain burning.] (92).

“Verse no. 93 = This is the symbolic abode of Lord Rudra or Shiva. [That is, he symbolises the fire element.] One should meditate upon this Lord who has three eyes¹, who is the one renowned for granting boons (to his followers and devotees, and in the presence case to the ascetic), who is as splendorous, illuminated and radiant as a sun which has just risen, and who has the ash of the fire sacrifice smeared all over his body (just like an ascetic, indicating that he is their great icon and patron deity of ascetics) (93).

[Note—¹As in the case of Brahma and Vishnu, the symbolism of Shiva having three eyes, which on the face of it appears to be an anomaly, is the following—his two eyes are the conventional eyes, and his third symbolises his deep insight and great wisdom and enlightenment. Shiva personifies the fire element which also has a symbolic significance. The fire is known to burn all impurities present in gold when it is put into it, thereby purifying the metal. Similarly, fire is used in blast furnaces to extract iron from its ore. Fire has the inherent ability to reduce to ashes all filth and garbage, which is a metaphoric way of saying that a person who has worshipped this element in the form of Shiva is supposed to have burnt all his faults, blemishes and shortcomings that taint his character and soul, thereby purifying his inner self. The ash is indicative of total renunciation and detachment from the world of materialism, because it is indicative of a renunciate way of life and symbolically stands for burning of everything into the fire pit. That is why Lord Shiva has been called the patron God of ascetics, hermits and Sanyasis who worship the fire element only.]

Besides these points, Shiva is the God assigned the task of concluding the world which necessitates his being closely associated with the ‘fire element’ in the sense that he must be as unrelenting, merciless, powerful and ferocious as the latter in order to conclude this creation inspite of all the odds. He must reduce everything to ashes just like the fire does. And it is from this ash that the new creation would emerge in due course. Herein lie the magic of creation and its chief Lord, Brahm, the Supreme Being—the fact that a new creation rises from ashes!]

“Verse no. 94 = By meditating this way on the fire element and Lord Shiva for a period of five Ghatis (two hours), the ascetic cannot be tormented by the fire element so much so that it cannot burn or scorch him even if he is made to enter a fiercely burning fire (94).

“Verse no. 95 = The next vital primary element is the air element and it is primarily located in the body between the heart and the middle of the eyebrows in the forehead. It has a symbolic shape of a hexagon, is dark hued, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter ‘Ya’ (as in ‘yearn’). The apex of this hexagon is at the point in the forehead where the two eyebrows meet, and where the third eye of wisdom is said to be located. That is why it is said to possess the quality of ‘Bhaasvar’, i.e. to be as bright as the sun during the day time (95).

[Note—In practical terms also, the primary wind that sustains life inside the otherwise dead and inane body is the breath that is inhaled thorough the nose and diverted to the lungs. Both these organs are located in the body in the region between the heart and the mid point of the eyebrows. If we join these organs, i.e. if a line is drawn linking the two lobes of the lungs, the triangular heart, the two shoulders and the root of the nose which has two openings, we will come with a rough shape of a hexagon. The lower-end point would be roughly the lower end of the sternum (i.e. the mid point between the heart and the lungs, the middle of the body where the ribs meet and the heart is felt to throb), and the other end is the root of the nose between the two eyebrows. Since the lower end is embedded in the abdomen, it is said to be ‘dark or Krishna’ in hue, while the upper end is said to be ‘Bhaasvar’ or like the sun because it is the location of the two eyes as well as the third eye of wisdom.]

“Verse no. 96 = The vital air or wind element is located in the body in the designated place marked by the letter ‘Ya’ of the Sanskrit language (as described in verse no. 95).

The ascetic should always remember the all-knowing, omniscient and all-pervading Lord of all creation, known as Ishwar, in this region. This Lord is called ‘Vishwatomukham’, literally the face of the entire world (96).

[Note—The Ishwar is called the ‘face of the world’ obviously because when we see anyone, we first see his face and the person is recognised by his face. Since the entire creation is the visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm, it is the visible face of Brahm or Ishwar. This Ishwar is also the all-pervading supreme Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma which resides in the individual creature as his true ‘self’, as well as in the form of the universal Spirit that is indistinguishable from the air or wind element which pervades throughout the world. Even as the air element is uniformly and universally present everywhere in this creation, this ‘spirit’ is therefore also present in equal measure everywhere. This spirit in the form of the air element is Ishwar or Lord of the world in the sense that no life is possible without it on this earth.]

“Verse no. 97 = If the ascetic meditates upon the supreme Lord called Vishwatomukh for a continuous period of five Ghatis (two hours), he can travel or move about in the sky just like the wind or air element. [In other words, he becomes as light as the air or wind element.] He has no fear from this element anymore and he never dies due to this element. [In other words, he never suffers from any disease related to the air or wind in the body such as from asthma, flatulence, improper movement of bowels, digestion, distribution of nutrients and blood inside the body, and all other functions that are governed by one or the other vital winds inside the body. He has not to suffer from suffocation and the fear from falling from a high place and dieing because in that case he would float in the air. Storms and other fierce forms of the wind cannot harm him also.] (97).

“Verse no. 98 = The sky element is located between the point midway of the two eyebrows and the top of the head. It is shaped like the sky (i.e. featureless, measureless and like an inverted parabolic transparent dish or bowl), is of the colour of smoke, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter ‘Ha’ (as in ‘hut’). It is illuminated with a diffused light like the sky is during the daytime (98).

“Verse no. 99 = The ascetic should inject the air or wind element into this sky element, and fill it with it, visualizing that Lord Shankar (Shiva) is present here, seated on the letter ‘Ha’¹. This Lord is a personification of the great Lord of all the Gods, and hence also known as Mahadeva², literally the great God. This Mahadeva is like a dot or point³ on the one hand, and like the vast, endless, featureless and infinite sky⁴ on the other hand. In the latter form he is known as Sada Shiva⁵, i.e. the eternal and ever-present Lord Shiva (99).

[Note—¹There is a lot of brilliant symbolism here. The letter ‘Ha’ is the first letter of the word ‘Hans’, meaning the divine swan. This bird is said to be very clean and wise, and therefore is the vehicle of the goddess of learning and wisdom, goddess Saraswati. By saying that the patron Lord of the sky element sits on this letter ‘Ha’, it is meant that this Lord is wisdom, erudition, learning and knowledge personified, he has full command over them. Hence he is the supreme Brahm.

²By this logic, Shankar is another name of Brahm. Since Brahm is the one from whom the entire creation has emerged, he is the greatest of all the Gods and their Lord,

hence he is called Mahadeva. Thus, Mahadeva and Shankar become interchangeable and synonymous.

³The origin of the creation was due to a vibration in the cosmic primordial gel much like ripples on the surface of a calm lake. This generated waves and these waves created energy to power the initial phases of the process of creation. But the vibration must have started from one single point. This is the 'dot' referred in this verse. It also refers to the fact that everything in existence has its origin from one 'point' source known as Brahm. The concept of Bindu and 'dot' have been explained in Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 37, 39-40, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴Now, this Brahm is not limited to one single point, but it spread as far and wide as the vast sky could spread. It was diffused in the sky like smoke, and that is why the colour of the sky element is symbolically depicted to be like that of the smoke.

⁵'Shiva' means someone who is auspicious, truthful and beautiful, and 'Sada' means one who is always the same, is constant, perpetual, consistent, ever-present, uniform and universal. All these qualities are present in the supreme Brahm. That is why the latter is called Sada Shiva.

So in a nutshell, Shankar and Shiva is the same great God who is the Lord of all the Gods as well as of the rest of the creation, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, personified, besides possessing all the qualities of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge, expertise, various skills etc. personified by goddess Saraswati riding on the Hans. The concept of 'Hans' has been elaborately explained in a number of Upanishads, viz. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hansopanishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.]

“Verse no. 100 = This Lord Shiva is most holy, divine, pure and immaculate, and as clear and clean as pure crystal. He has a crescent moon tucked in the lock of hairs on his head. He has *five mouths (or heads)*, is very sober, gentle and pleasant, and has ten arms and three eyes (100).

[Note—Since Lord Shiva is the patron God of Yogis or those ascetics who do Yoga, especially those who practice its exercises and rituals as propounded by Patanjali, and this Upanishads deals with Yoga, the supreme transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm of metaphysics and Upanishads is personified here in him.

Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a *crescent moon* on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called 'one Pada' or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The *five heads of Shiva* stand for the 'Panch Vyom' or the five forms that the sky element is said to have. According to Vedanta, the concept of the *sky* or 'Akash' has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are *five* subtle skies

representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or *Koshas* present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intellectual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref.-- Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

The *ten arms* of Shiva stand for the ten forms of the subtle sky element. They are the following—(1) Ghatakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called 'Swarga' which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

The *three eyes* consist of two normal conventional eyes and the third eye of wisdom and deep insight. The significance of the three eyes have been explained in note of verse no. 93 above.]

“Verse no. 101 = That Lord Shiva is armed with all types of weapons (as a symbol of protection against or to counter all sorts of worldly evils and faults that might attack a spiritual aspirant and attempt to pull him down from the exalted position that he has acquired by so hard effort). He is also decorated with numerous ornaments (as a symbol of his divine beauty and magnificence, as a token of his natural charm and a pleasant and appealing appearance). Goddess Parvati his divine consort and she literally is his other half. [That is, if Shiva is the supreme Brahm or Supreme Being, Parvati is his Prakriti and Maya. If Shiva is the Viraat Purush, Parvati is Mother Nature.] He is the one who grants boons and is the root and primary cause of all conceivable causes and reasons that exist in this world (101).

“Verse no. 102 = If that Lord Shiva is meditated upon as a personification of the sky element and as being inherently present in this element, it is certain that the practitioner is

able to acquire the mystical powers to move through the sky (like a bird or other sky-borne creatures).

By this meditation, the spiritual aspirant feels an immense sense of satisfaction and happiness no matter where he lives¹ (102).

[Note--¹This is because he feels the freedom to move about any where he likes, and is not constrained to the earth. Another interpretation is that he feels as light as the air or wind element because this is the only element that fills the entire space of the sky and can move in at its will. He feels unrestrained and free like the bird. He also feels untainted, unblemished, un-faulted and untarnished like the pure and colourless sky element. He feels infinite, vast, open, eternal and imperishable as the sky element. He feels himself as being all-pervading, omnipresent and all-covering just like the sky element. This notion and feeling would naturally be spiritually and emotionally uplifting and morale boosting for him; he would feel elated and accomplished.]

(v) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 67-69, 176-178; Canto 5, verse nos. 13-15, 49-51—

“Canto 1, verse no. 67 = Yoga is the best auspicious thing to do for a spiritual aspirant. Yoga is Shiva personified (i.e. Yoga is an embodiment of all the glorious virtues that Shiva stands for, for instance beauty, auspiciousness, truthfulness, holiness, renunciation and enlightenment of the highest order).

It is the finest path of spiritualism and it helps one to realise one's spiritual powers and obtain one's objectives. There is nothing better than it (67).

“Canto 1, verse no. 68 = Yoga makes it possible to establish a union of the two apparently opposite forces in creation which are otherwise irreconcilable, such as for example it can forge a union between the Pran (the breath which remains restricted to the upper part of the body and has a tendency to move upwards and escape through the nostrils) and the Apaana (the vital wind which moves downwards in the intestines and escapes through the anus)¹, between the various Dhaatus (elements) of the body (of which there are five primary elements, seventeen and twenty three secondary elements which would depend upon the system of classification adopted, nine tertiary elements, and finally the seven structural elements)².

It helps metaphorically to establish the union between the moon and the sun. [That is, it has the stupendous ability to bring together and establish a bondage or union between two such opposite forces of Nature as the moon and the sun, the former being an epitome of the eclectic virtues of remaining cool, calm and soothing while the other symbolises the dynamism displayed by the natural forces of creation such as energy, heat and fire. The moon is cool while the sun is blazingly hot; the moon shines in the night while the sun shines in the day. It is unimaginable to think that they can co-exist. But Yoga is so powerful that it can bring this about in a symbolic manner in order to effect a neutral state of existence when these two opposite forces of Nature cancel each other out.]

Therefore Yoga, with its majestic powers and astounding potentials, is the well chosen and correct instrument that can actually bring about a union between the creature's individual Atma, his 'self', and the Parmatma, the cosmic and supreme 'Self'.

[Yoga can perform this seemingly impossible task of bringing together the individual creature called the Jiva-Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm called the Parmatma because it has this stupendous potential and astounding power to effect this union. This has been symbolically emphasised by saying that it can bring the moon and the sun together; it can unite the Pran and the Apaana.] (68).

[Note—¹The Pran wind is present in the upper part of the body, while the Apaana wind is located in the lower half. The former is upwardly mobile while the latter is downwards mobile. From all practical point, the chances of their ever coming together are almost negligible. But the practice of various exercises of Yoga makes this actually feasible and possible, thereby establishing its claim to bring about the union of the Jiva-Atma and the Parmatma.

²The gross body can be studied at various levels depending upon the classification used to study its constitution and structure. The structural elements are variously called the Bhuts, the Dhaatus and the Tattvas.

(a) The *Primary level* of the elements—This consists of the five primary elements called the 'Pancha Mahabhuts'. They were formed at the beginning of creation, and consist of earth, water or fluid, fire or energy, air or wind and sky or space elements in increasing degree of subtlety.

They can be studied at two levels—one at the very core level, and the other at the more general level.

(a) (i) The study of the body at the core level of the five Bhuts consisting of the five primary elements consisting of the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluids, and earth. Refer verse nos. 1-2, and 5-6 of Shaarirako-panishad. Briefly, the earth element formed the solid part of the body, the water element formed the fluid part, the fire element formed the warmth and heat of the body, the movement of the body is revelation of the air element, and the subtle space between various organs and tissues of the body, both at the external as well as internal levels, is the sky element.

(a) (ii) The next level would be the various Koshas or Sheaths that are made of a combination of these five elements. They are the following—Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), Pran Maye Kosh (the vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mind sheath), Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), and Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). These Koshas are also like the elements or units that decide the complexities of the creature's body and its position in the hierarchy of evolution.

All the living organisms can be classified into the following five types depending upon the number of Koshas they have—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kosha, the Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Koshas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Koshas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kosh refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jarayuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Koshas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last

Kosh refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Koshas. Besides the four Koshas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(b) The *secondary level* of study of the body and its structure would be at the level of the Tattvas. It consists of the Linga Deha made up of the seventeen Tattvas which are seventeen dimensions or units or elements that constitute it—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyana and Udaana) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level. Reference: Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 16.

The gross body can be further classified as consisting of twenty three elements. They are the following—

(1) The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

(2) Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

(3) Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.]

(4) The eight Vikaars such as one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse). These elements are called the eight 'Vikaars' (literally meaning faults, errors, shortcomings or imperfections) that are present in Nature and affect the basic nature of all living beings.

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—5 organs of perceptions + 5 organs of action + 5 senses of perceptions + 8 Vikaars = total 23. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 17-19.]

(c) The next level of study of the body is the *tertiary level*. The tertiary elements that constitute the body all living beings would be the following nine—the three Gunas such as the Sata which the best quality in creation, the Raja which is the medium quality, and the Tama which is the lowest quality (refer Shaarirako-panishad, verse nos. 7-13), and the six aspects of Anatahakaran which is the inner self of the creature consisting of the sub-conscious or conscience that governs his innate character. The five aspects of Anthahakaran are the following (1) Mana or mind, (2) Buddhi or intellect, (3) Chitta or the faculty of concentration and memory; knowledge and consciousness, (4) Ahankar or ego, pride, arrogance, (5) Vrittis or inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and

temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body—refer Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 3), and (6) the various Vasanas (worldly passions, lusts and yearnings—Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2). The total comes to $3 + 6 = 9$. These nine decide the inherent character and basic nature and temperament of the creature.

(d) The 7 Dhaatus—The structural features of the gross physical body consists of the so-called seven *Dhaatus*. These stand for the structural constituent of the body which supports and sustains its existence. According to ancient Indian system of medicine, they are the following—(1) Rasa (lymph and mucous; sap), (2) Rakta (blood), (3) Maansa (flesh), (4) Meda (fat and muscles), (5) Ashthi (bones and cartilage), (6) Meja (marrow), and (7) Shukra (semen).

According to other interpretations, these seven Dhaatus which form the structural features of the gross body and give it its shape and support it are the following—(1) all forms of fluid ingredients such as blood, urine, mucous, lymph etc, (2) bone and cartilage, (3) marrow, (4) flesh, fat and muscles, (5) abdominal organs such as stomach etc, (6) skin, and (7) Naadis (arteries, veins, capillaries and nerves).

(e) The structure of the body as explained in the Upanishads can be easily understood when we analyse it in the context of modern science of chemistry. This gross body of a creature can be compared to the molecular structure of any chemical substance or any thing in this world for that matter that is made up of certain basic elements. The molecules are also not visible to the naked eye just like the ingredients of the body mentioned above except some of them such as the skin and mucous much like the external features of the finished chemical product.

At the next level comes the atomic structure, or the subtle level of constitution of the body. It is like the atoms of any chemical molecule that make up the basic building blocks or units of that molecule. For example, Benzene has a hexagonal structure which would be like the gross structure of the creature's body called the Dhaatu, while the Carbon and Hydrogen atoms (C_6H_6) that go in to form the basic and fundamental ingredients of Benzene are like its subtle structure called the Bhut.

To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of isomerism in chemistry. The word 'iso' means the 'same', and 'meros' means 'parts'. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called 'isomers' of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. structural isomerism and stereo isomerism. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved.

Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular formulae represents two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human species which have all the gross features the same but the internal

geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and sets him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is isomorphism wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the isotopes in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

Refer to verse no. 40, 56 and 147 of this Canto no. 1 in this context.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 69 = In other words, merger and mutual nullifying of all the opposite natural forces and qualities in creation so as to bring about a state of non-duality marked by exemplary neutrality, homogeneity, uniformity, universality and equanimity of the highest order and of the purest form is the purpose of Yoga.

Now I shall preach you about the eclectic knowledge which is called ‘Yog Shikha’¹ (69).

[Note—¹The word Yog Shikha refers to the pinnacle of spiritual achievement obtained by following the great tenets of meditation and contemplation. The word ‘Shikha’ means the tip or apex, while the word ‘Yoga’ means meditation and contemplation done to bring about a union of two or more forces of Nature together—like the case of bring together of the sun and the moon cited above in verse no. 68. Yoga brings into effect the union of the individual soul with the cosmic Soul; it forges an everlasting relationship between the micro and the macro level of existence so that the false sense of duality and distinction are eliminated and a wholesome uniformity is established. Yoga is the process by which the two sides of an equilateral triangle are extended to meet at the apex which symbolises the climax of one’s spiritual endeavours.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 176 = The Chaturastra Chakra is located at the site where the earth (representing the living creation and the visible world) has its beginning, and its patron deity is Lord Brahma, the creator¹.

After that is the Chakra shaped like a crescent moon, called the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra. Its patron deity is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. This Chakra is situated on the water element² (176).

[Note--¹That is, this Chakra has four corners and it represents the earth which acts as the base for all living world as is known to us. The four corners are the four directions into which the earth is hypothetically divided for the purpose of study and helping the creature to decide his location. They are south, west, north and east.

²In other words, the water element is symbolically shaped like a shallow convex bowl or tray because the water assumes the shape of the vessel in which it is kept and it cannot be held in a completely flat surface. So the vessel that can hold water must be slightly curved like the crescent moon.

The Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 27-28 describe the subtle heart shaped like a divine Lotus as a Peeth where the supreme Lord known as Vishnu is honorably seated.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 177 = The Agni Chakra representing the fire element is triangular in shape and its patron deity is Lord Rudra (Shiva), the concluder of creation¹.

The Vayu Chakra representing the wind or air element is shaped like a hexagon and its patron deity is Ishwar, the Supreme Being² (177).

[Note--¹The colour of fire is red or orange, and the sign depicting danger is a triangle. That is why road signs depicting danger are triangular in outline. Fire is the most dangerous of the natural elements; hence it is represented by the triangle.

²The severe cyclonic storms appearing during the rainy season are observed to move in rapid circular motions, changing directions unpredictably and frequently. The tornadoes or twisters and hot whirlwinds during summers also move in rapid circles that sweep across the land and change course unpredictably. This natural tendency of the wind to move in circles and change direction at will is represented by depiction of its basic shape as a hexagon—which is an-almost circular shape but having corners and straight lines to indicate that the wind has the inborn characteristic of moving in a particular direction for some time and then suddenly changing course and taking another direction. This is the reason why one feels the wind blowing sharply against one’s face if one stands in the ‘corner’ of a large hallway. The movement of the air is more marked at sharp bends as compared to smooth turns.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 178 = The Akash Chakra representing the sky or space element is shaped like a circle and its patron deity is Sada-Shiva (the eternal truthful Brahm)¹ (178).

[Note--¹The best shape that the forces of Nature allow in order to retain everything within the outer boundary of existence is a rounded ball, a sphere. Since the sky encloses everything in existence and prevents them from scattering about and getting lost in the wilderness of creation, it must have a spherical shape. This is the basic principle of physics that when any thing moves around any central attracting entity such as the planets moving around the sun, the path that they take is circular because of the natural gravitational pull of the sun. The circular shape is the ideal shape that allows everything to be under the control of one central controlling authority and preventing them from scattering around, dashing against each other chaotically, or running amok and getting lost in a tangential manner. The natural forces of centripetal and centrifugal begin to play simultaneously to ensure a circular outline.

In the present case of the creation, the sky represents the supreme Brahm around which the rest of the creation revolves. So in metaphysics this Brahm is like the physical sun in the sky, the rest of the planetary system that goes around the sun in circles is like

the rest of the creation that revolves around this Brahm. This is the macrocosmic picture, while the microcosmic counterpart would be the Atma around which the rest of the being of the creature revolves. Even the microscopic atom is shaped like a sphere or ball because the electrons must take this shape if they have to remain in their place orbiting around the central nucleus. The sky appears to be like an inverted hemisphere, but considering the fact that what we see is only the half part of it, it follows that when we complete the hemisphere it would be a circle.]

“Canto 5, verse no. 13 = The realm of the earth has a symbolic four-cornered outline (shape). Its patron God is Brahma. The realm of the water has the symbolic shape of a crescent moon and its patron God is Lord Vishnu (13).

“Canto 5, verse no. 14 = The realm of the fire element is triangular in shape, and its patron God is Lord Rudra (the angry form of Shiva).

The realm of the air or wind element has a hexagonal shape and its patron deity is Sankarshan¹ (14).

[Note—¹*Sankarshan* is the older brother of Lord Krishna, i.e. Balaram, according to the Purans. The word literally means ‘well drawn’. In his earlier incarnation, he was Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram. Laxman was an incarnation of Seshnath, the legendary hooded serpent on whom Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the cosmic ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar. Hence, Sankarshan is Lord Seshnath who is supposed to support the earth on its hoods.]

“Canto 5, verse no. 15 = The realm of the sky is rounded (and that is why we see the sky like an inverted hemisphere). Its patron deity is Sriman Narayan (Vishnu) (15).

“Canto 5, verse no. 49 = When his mind meditates about and experiences the presence of Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss) in the head, i.e. when the enlightened ascetic is able to experience the presence of the supreme transcendental source of eternal bliss and peace known as Brahm in the region of the Vyom Chakra and the Brahm Randhra Chakra by focusing the attention of his mind and the energy of his vital winds called Pran there, he is able to vanquish thirst and hunger (for worldly things, sensual pleasures and material comforts) along with overcoming the bad affects of all (spiritual) poisons¹. [That is, by becoming Brahm-realised and experiencing its attendant spiritual ecstasy and bliss, the ascetic has nothing more to desire and wants nothing in this material world. The enjoyments and comforts of this material world are transient, artificial and inconsequential as compared to this spiritual high of ecstasy and bliss experienced by Brahm-realisation. He is deemed to have overcome all spiritual hurdles by way of overcoming the numerous faults and imperfections that create uncountable obstacles in his spiritual progress and reaching of the ultimate goal of emancipation and salvation.]

When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the earth element² and contemplating about it, he acquires the mystical powers that allow him to take his mind to any corner of the earth, even beyond it to the nether world called Patal. [That is, this mystical power empowers him to transcend all physical and geographical barriers that usually impede the reach of an ordinary man, and his mind can go anywhere without any hindrance. He can think of everything that exists on this earth, and his mind can even visualise what is hidden inside the bowels of the earth and beyond it. While living on one part of the earth, he can know what is happening on its other side. This also would imply

that nothing in this world would ever influence his mind and captivate it by trapping it in its charm and preventing it from breaking free from its shackles and proceeding ahead.] (49).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 57-60, 62-64.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 85-87.]

“Canto 5, verse no. 50 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the water element¹ and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he need not fear from any harm being caused to him from water in any form, such as drowning in it or suffering from any water borne disease or some internal medical problems arising out of water such as oedema of lungs, dropsy of tissues and other diseases due to misbalance in the water content of the body.]

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the fire element² and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he cannot be burnt by fire; his body never has to suffer from lack of vital heat and energy; he never suffers from fever and other diseases due to misbalance in the fire element in Nature. Besides this, his speech acquires all the potent of this element because fire is said to be an integral part of the faculty of speech. He has proper eyesight because again the fire and its light are responsible for the faculty of sight to function properly. He has not to suffer from lack of hunger or digestive problems because the fire is responsible for the proper functioning of both.] (50).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 88-90 ½ .

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos.90-94.]

“Canto 5, verse no. 51 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the air or wind element¹ and contemplating about it, he is deemed to have acquired the ability to move in the sky like birds. [That is, he becomes so light that he can float in the air.]

By fixing his mind in the exalted sky element², which is a metaphoric way of saying that by becoming as exalted and sublime as the supreme Brahm himself who has an exalted abode as high as the sky, such a realised and acclaimed ascetic can acquire such mystical and eclectic powers as Anima etc.³ (51).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 95-97.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 98-102.

³Anima is one of the eight mystical powers that are collectively called Siddhis.]

(vi) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Shaarirak Upanishad*, Verse nos. 1-3, 6—

“verse no. 1 = This gross body of the creature is a combination of the five basic elements in creation called the ‘Pancha Mahabhuts’, such as earth etc. (the others being water, fire, air and sky)¹.

The solid, thicker, denser and heavier part of the body is made up of the earth element. [For example, the bones, skin, nails, hairs etc.]

The fluid part is made up of the water element. [For example, blood, lymph, semen, mucous, urine, semi-solid stool etc.] The heat and warmth in the living body is the fire element. [A dead body is ice-cold, and since the fire element is missing in such a body, it cannot live and is deemed to be lifeless.]

The constant movement and restlessness that is so typical of any living organism is a manifestation of the air or wind element. [This movement may not be externally visible, but is always there in some form or the other. For example, the heart continues to beat and the blood flows uninterruptedly even while a man sleeps; all the internal organs such as the kidneys, lungs, intestines, brain etc. continue to function during this state though externally there is no activity. A man breathes continuously though 'breath' cannot be visibly seen. Breath is nothing but the air element in its life-giving role. The Trishkhi Brahmin Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 8 says that the movement of the consciousness inside the body is through the different Naadis or ducts such as nerves, veins and the like. This consciousness is metaphorically represented by the different 'Gods' that are said to moving in these Naadis and controlling their respective functioning. These Gods who personifies various forces of Nature are also metaphors for the Pran's different forms because they regulate life in a living body. In other words, the 'consciousness' and 'Pran' or the wind element are synonymous with each other and together are equally responsible to keep the body alive. The body of any living being cannot survive without either of them. Even immobile forms of living creation such a plants continue their activities day and night without resting for a moment. The importance of air for the life can be proved by keeping someone in a vacuum—sure enough he would die immediately. In fact, life and movement are synonymous with each other; only a dead body shows no movement in the real sense. Similarly, life and air are also synonymous with each other.]

The hollow space present in the body in a very subtle and invisible form (such as the space between the organs and the inter-cellular space, and even the space inside the cell between its constituent parts, the pores on the skin, the hollow of the nostrils, the auditory canal, the hollow of the mouth and anus, the air passage of the lungs and the food passage of the digestive canal et al.) is made up of the sky or space element (1).

Note—¹The five primary elements called the 'Tattvas' came into being at the very beginning of creation. The Tattvas are the primary or fundamental elements or units or dimensions or aspects of creation which act as the building blocks of creation, not only as its brickwork but also to decide the shape its exterior façade would take as well as the interior character and quality of the construction.

We have *primary elements* that were formed at the time of creation, and the *secondary elements* that developed later on as offshoots to the process of creation. Primarily there were five basic elements—such as the sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. From them came the secondary elements. These latter vary according to the level and dynamics of creation one is dealing with in terms of metaphysics. These elements can be compared to the elements of material science of the modern world, such as the elements calcium, magnesium, potassium, selenium etc. which are heavier and grosser in nature as compared to other elements such as the gases oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, helium etc. which are lighter and subtler. Then there is carbon which is the base of an entire field of chemistry called organic chemistry, much like we have Atma in metaphysics, that in association with different other elements form a vast array of organic chemicals and material products of daily use. If carbon is compared to the basic unit called the Atma in metaphysics, then the other elements that combine with it are the various Gunas, Vikaars, Vasanas and Vrittis that surround this Atma to give rise to an uncountable number of creatures of different virtues, nature, temperaments, characters and personalities.

In this scenario, Brahm would be like the primary Atom which left to itself is neutral and inactive. It is only when certain changes take place in its core, such as the shift in the position of its electron or change in the number of its protons and electrons etc. that the chain of reaction starts that would ultimately result in not only producing newer elements that combine in mind-boggling permutations and combinations to create an endless array of material things, but also releasing energy in the process or absorbing matter from the surrounding atmosphere. At the cosmic level this is seen in exploding stars or formation of huge black-holes.

The Atma would be more like the atom of carbon which is at the heart of all organic compounds that exist in this world, while Brahm would be the primary form of the atom, i.e. the atom of the first element of the Periodic Table with atomic number 1, or even the nucleus of other heavier atoms of the higher elements of this Table from atomic number 2 onwards.]

“verse no. 2 = “The five sense organs of perception are called ‘Gyan Indris’, such as ears etc. (the others being eyes, nose, tongue and skin).

The ears represent the sky element; the ears are the manifestations of the sky element. [The ears have the function of hearing, but it can hear only if the sound reaches it. Sound would need open space and an ethereal medium to travel and reach the ear because it does so in the form of waves. That is why the ears turn towards the direction in the sky from where the sound comes. The ears are like the modern day radar that is made to turn and rotate in order to optimize the reception of sound. That is why we cannot hear anything if there is a solid obstruction between the origin of sound and the ears because it would obstruct the path of the movement of sound waves traveling in the ether present in the space of the sky between the origin point of the sound and the ear.]

The skin represents the air element; the skin is the manifestation of the air or wind element. [The skin has the function of feeling the sense of touch. When a soft breeze blows over our skin, it can immediately feel being subtly and softly massaged by the former. The excellent ability of the skin to exhibit the subtle sense of touching and feeling anything in its subtlest form is manifested when it can feel the air or wind blowing over it, because this air or wind is not physically seen but its presence nevertheless ‘felt and known’. Similarly, when a fire is burning fiercely, one gets scorched by its heat though one does not actually touch it. This happens because the hot air coming in from the fire touches the skin and makes it feel scorched and hot. This feeling and sensation is the exclusive domain of the skin, for the ears, eyes, nose and the tongue can’t do so. Their sphere of activity and functions are different from one another.]

The eyes represent the fire element; the eyes are the manifestations of the fire element. [The eye can see anything only if the latter is illuminated, or there is light in the general surrounding area; it cannot see anything in dark. The fire element has light as one of its integral characteristic feature—where there is a fire burning, there would be light. That is why a fire is lit in the forest to ward off wild animals because they are scared by its light and leaping flames. The fire element has heat and energy inherent in it too, and the eyes can perceive the existence of anything if the fire element manifests itself even in its non-visible form as heat and energy as is evident from modern day night-vision instruments such as night-vision goggles etc. which precisely exploit this phenomenon of the ability of the eye to perceive the existence of anything if there are subtle components of fire element present in the thing viewed. The infra-red rays that are emitted by anything not frigid cold are translated into vision by these specialised instruments. In the

absence of the light in the visible spectrum, the eye utilizes the subtler components of fire, such as heat and energy and the infra-red rays emanated by anything that is warm or hot, to perceive things. Similarly, modern day weapons which have so-called smart electronic eyes can home on to their targets relying upon heat emanating from them.]

The tongue represents the water element; the tongue is the manifestation of the water element. [The tongue can taste anything only when the enzymes of taste present in the saliva dissolve the chemicals present in the food tasted. Suppose a piece of iron is put on the tongue. Would it enjoy its taste as much as it longs for a delicious sweet dish? This is because the water element is not present in the solid piece of iron that can enable the enzymes of the saliva to taste iron like it would taste, say for example, a piece of dry fruit or a grain of rice which are also relatively hard as compared to cooked soft food. Even uncooked and raw food does not appeal to the tongue as much as properly cooked food for this precise reason—the chemicals of uncooked food do not sufficiently dissolve in water present in the saliva to interact with the enzymes of taste. Until the water has softened the food, the latter cannot be gulped; it would get stuck either in the mouth or in the throat. That is why of all the external organs of the body, it is the tongue that is the moistest and supple.]

The nose represents the earth element; the nose is the manifestation of the earth element. [The nose has the main function of smelling, and smell has its origin in anything that is gross and that has an affinity to the earth by preferring to be near it. This is evident from the fact that there is no smell in outer space; we smell things only when we land on the earth. Even on earth, places that are symbolic of life and fertility, such as green and moist areas rich in fauna and flora give out a fragrance, whether likable or not, but dry and parched areas of the same earth, such as arid deserts and snow covered mountains do not harbour smell. A garden is full of fragrances of flowers and the sweet aroma of fruits which spread over large areas in the surrounding place, even carried to far distances by the wind, but if we were to rise above the surface of the earth, say in a hot air balloon, the smells would not be smelt by us high up in the sky. In other words, smell has a direct affinity to earth and things that this earth harbours. That is why we have such terms as ‘earthy smell’, such as the one that comes out from earthen pots and mud houses. Wherever there is earth element, there would be a subtle and sublime ‘smell’ typical of life in all its forms.]

The respective senses of perceptions of these sense organs are word (sound—pertaining to the organ known as the ear), touch (feeling—pertaining to the organ known as the skin), form and shape (sight—pertaining to the organ known as the eye), the various genres of taste (pertaining to the organ known as the tongue), and smell (both the sweet and the foul—pertaining to the organ known as the nose).

All these perceptions and their organs have their origin in the five basic elements of creation, called the ‘Panch Maha Bhuts’. [Refer Prashno-panishad of Atharva Veda, question (Canto) 4, verse nos. 8-9.] (2).

“verse no. 3 = [This verse describes the different organs of action of the gross body and their functions.]

The organs of action are the following—the organ of speech (i.e. the mouth), the hands, the legs, the anus and the genitals.

Their functions are respectively to speak (mouth), to take and give (hand), to move and go to some place (leg), to excrete waste products from the body (anus), and to reproduce (genital).

All of them have their origin in the Maha Bhuts such as the earth element etc. (the others being water, fire, air and sky elements). [This is because since everything in existence have their origin in these five elements which act as the fundamental building blocks of creation, the bricks of the edifice known as creation, nothing exists that do not have one or the other of these five basic elements playing a role in its existence.] (3).

“Verse no. 6 = Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight), taste and smell—these are the five activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the earth element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight) and taste—these are the four activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the water element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), and shape and form (sight)—these are the three activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the fire element.

Word (hearing, sound) and touch (feeling)—these are the two activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the air or wind element.

And word (hearing and sound) is the only one activity which is described as the characteristic virtue displayed by the sky element (6).

[Note—To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of *isomerism* in chemistry. The word ‘iso’ means the ‘same’, and ‘meros’ means ‘parts’. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called ‘isomers’ of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. *structural isomerism* and *stereo isomerism*. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved.

Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular formulae represents two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human species which have all the gross features the same but the internal geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and sets him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is *isomorphism* wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal

structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the *isotopes* in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

The verse clearly outlines the pyramidal structure of the primary elements in creation. The 'earth' being the grossest and heaviest is at the base, while the 'sky' being the subtlest and lightest is at the top, with the rest of the three elements, viz. the 'water', the 'fire' and the 'air' being arranged in an ascending manner clearly show their declining grossness and increasing subtlety.]”

Now, in the next phase of our discussion, let us examine what are the philosophical importance, significance and relevance of the Panch Maha Bhuts from the perspective of creation and life in it.

As we have seen above, the Panch Maha Bhuts or the Five Great Primay Elements are Sky, Air, Fire, Water and Earth, we shall now take them one by one and understand their subtle connotations when seen from the analytical glass of metaphysics and philosophy vis-à-vis life and existence in this creation.

(a) The Sky/Space element or AKASH (pronounced as “Aakaash”)—

The sky or space is the subtlest of the five elements—viz. earth, water, fire, wind/air, space/sky. It pervades everywhere but is uncorrupt, unpolluted and faultless in all respects. The blemishes, faults, vices, evils, sins, corruptions, misdemeanors and all sorts of digressions and contaminations present in the world are like suspended dust particles, smoke, moisture, clouds, the numerous other things such as the various birds and the celestial bodies high up in the sky which create an illusion of a sky that is spotted or dotted or polluted or coloured or overcast with these uncountable objects that are extraneous to the sky, that are not integral to it but nevertheless appear to be a part of the sky. The sky has nothing to do with them; it remains absolutely unconcerned with and untainted by them, for once they are removed from the scene the sky is uniform and spotless from one end of the horizon to the other. This example is very practical and can

be observed by anyone. That is why 'sky' is used as a metaphor to describe anything that remains free from the influences of those things that appear to be an integral part of it but are in actual fact not related with it by even any remote chance.

The sky has the opposite types of characteristics present in it. For example, the space of the vast cosmos has no form but the space inside a bottle or a pot takes the shape of the bottle or the pot respectively. Similarly, the vast sky in its basic and truthful form is spotless and without any colours, but it appears to be spotted with so many stars and specs of clouds and smoke of different colours as well as with birds of different forms, colours and shapes flying here and there. The colour of the sky during the evening or morning hours present a canvas of so many colours which appear to be real, but they are obviously a reflection of the colours of the light of the sun as reflected from the various impurities present in the otherwise spotless sky.

This is what is meant here—though the Atma or Brahm are inherently and basically pristine pure and clean, but when they come in contact with this world, the different flaws and faults of the latter cast their shadow and make them appear to have some or the other kind of spots in them.

The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.

Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. That is, these three forms of the skies, viz. the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

The 'sky', which was originally conceived as something that was 'void' or 'nothing', gets filled with 'air', simply because void can't exist, and the creation which came into being in this void needed some base for its origin and coming into being. The molecules or atoms of air are in a state of continuous agitation and flux; they collide with each other, they form a chain of molecules which give rise to different layers or strata of air which extend from the surface of this earth to the stratosphere. This continuous turmoil produces 'sound'. Various physical and chemical processes come into play, producing gases of varying density and characteristic features. Air has particles of dust and different gases, which produce the perception of touch. Friction of the various molecules present in the air produces static electricity which is observed as a scintillating

display of atmospheric discharge of electrically charged particles in the sky often observed at the poles. This sparkle of static electric discharge is synonymous with 'fire'. Perhaps the Upanishadic sage got this brilliant idea when he observed a meteor shower during the night. The two elementary gases hydrogen and oxygen combine to form the molecule H_2O commonly known as 'water'. With all these essential ingredients in place, the solidifying and cooling down process of nature starts its effect and produces soil and rocks which are symbolised by the 'earth' element. Then gravity and magnetic forces come into play, giving density, gravity and grossness, indicative of the grossness or heaviness of not only the earth but also of the air around it. Previously, before gravity and other forces of nature came into play, this air was subtle and very light; it spread universally and uniformly to all the corners of the cosmos. But with the gradual formation of different celestial bodies from the primordial cosmic gases, each having its own gravity and other natural physical and chemical forces, the air was pulled or sucked in, leaving the rest of the space beyond the reach of these celestial bodies into a big void.

The sky is pregnant with a wide variety of impurities. It is full of celestial bodies besides cosmic debris. It has the burning furnace of the sun as well as the cool pitcher of nectar symbolised by the moon. The black clouds of a storm with its stabs of ferocious lightening coexist with white fluffy clouds floating lazily across the calm sky. There are birds of prey and there are harmless kites flying in it. There is the polluted haze of the city as is the pristine clear atmosphere of a village and the mountain. There is the brightness of the day and the foreboding darkness of the night. But the wonder is that none of these really affect the sky at all—it remains clear and untainted in its basic nature and form. All these things cited here are extraneous to the fundamental nature and characteristic of the sky. The sky treats all of them with the same magnanimity and kindness. Similarly, a wise man treats all the creatures with whom he has to interact in this world with the same equanimity and fortitude as the sky.

The sky has a unique quality—it harbours the entire creation in its bosom as nothing that exist lies outside the outer periphery of the sky, but still it remains completely detached from each and every thing present inside it. The sky remains unaffected, uninfluenced, unattached with and untainted by anything that it harbours or shelters. Whatever visual attributes that one sees in the sky, such as its blue or azure haze, the changing colours at different times of the day, are only optical illusions created by various factors of Nature. Even the clouds or the sun in the day time and the stars and the moon in the night do not effect the neutral nature of the sky because while the sun is there the sky appears to be bright and sunny, and when the moon rises the same sky assumes the colour of the moonlight with no indication that it was so bright earlier. The overcast sky with dark clouds becomes crystal clear when the clouds go away, and the darkness of the night sky dotted with umpteen numbers of stars can give no indication that it would be brightly lit during the day with no trace of any single star. The plumes of pungent smoke being belched into the sky by factories and fires do not effect the bland and neutral form of the sky, for the sky absorbs them all with great equanimity and fortitude without being affected by them at all.

Everything in existence needs the sky to develop and grow. The fire needs space representing the sky to burn, the air needs it to flow, the earth needs it to remain in its place and move around the sun which in turn regulates the seasons and other environmental factors, the plants need it for their growth and development as is proved

by the fact that they become stunted and die in the want of space to grow and spread their branches, the creature needs it to breathe, stand and grow, and so on and so forth. The air can be sucked out from an enclosed space to create a vacuum, but the 'sky' would still be there. The world would die and go into oblivion along with all its components, including the other four elements (earth, fire, water and air) at the time of conclusion of creation, but the sky would still be there; in fact it is in the vast bottomless pit of the sky that the creation would vanish then. And when the time comes for the emergence of the new creation, it would do so in the bowl of the sky. Nothing exists beyond the sky.

The incorruptible and untainted nature of the sky has been explicitly endorsed in *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 24 by Lord Varaaha, the Boar incarnation of Lord Vishnu, himself.

To quote this Upanishad—"A wise and enlightened man goes about the daily chores of life in this world in a normal way so much so that he may even exhibit such traits as showing Raag and Dwesh (i.e. either having attractions for anything, or having aversions for it), but such traits are only superficially present in him, for internally he is not at all affected or tainted or influenced or moved or bothered by them in the least. His internal being is as untainted, as unruffled, as undivided, as uniform, as uncorrupted, as unconcerned and as un-torn as the sky which always remains uncorrupted, taintless, steady, uniform, universal, immutable and indivisible inspite of numerous things of uncountable variations impregnating it and attempting to tarnish its basically immaculate and immutable character or attempting to disrupt its uniformity, immutability and indivisible nature¹. Such a person is deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta' (24).

[Note—¹The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.

Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. That is, these three forms of the skies, viz. the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.]

The *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 24 asserts that a wise and enlightened man who has been able to annihilate (i.e. overcome the restless nature; to control, tame and train) the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) attains the exalted stature that can be compared to the sky. That is, he becomes quiet, calm, untainted, uncorrupt, unchanging, unmoved and steady under all circumstances.

From the metaphysical angle, *Brahm and sky are often regarded as being analogous* because they exhibit almost identical properties and attributes—such as being fathomless, vast, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading, all-encompassing, incorruptible and untainted etc. In this context, refer *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 37.

The *metaphysical* significance and relevance of the sky element have been highlighted in the *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 16; Canto 2, verse no. 37; Canto 4, verse no. 24; Canto 5, verse no. 77.

Now let us examine the verses of the *Annapurna Upanishad* —
 “Canto 1, verse no. 16 = When one becomes wise, erudite and enlightened he is able to see the truth behind the phenomenon of image formation and understand that the image that is seen in the mirror or any other reflecting surface is a reflection of some principal entity, and therefore it is both identical to this principal entity as well as completely different, distinct and separate from it.

[Suppose we see the image of a tree in a mirror. The image is exactly like the actual tree, but while the tree has a physical and tangible existence, its image is not, as the latter is merely a reflection of the former and therefore non-existent in the real sense.]

Similarly, pure crystal appears to be red when it is in contact with something that is red coloured. But actually the crystal has no colour of its own but merely reflects the colour of its surroundings or the things with which it is associated.

The sky element is essentially one, uniform and indivisible whole by nature, but it is nevertheless classified into various categories for the purpose of understanding—such as we have ‘Ghatakash’ or the sky present inside the hollow of an empty mud-pot, or ‘Mathakash’ or the space within the walls of a monastery. So these names create an illusion that these skies are different from one another, but the fact is that they aren’t.

[For instance, if the mud-pot is broken there remains no segregation between the space that was present inside its wall and the vast space present outside its wall. There is no need to mix them; there is no effort involved in their becoming one and the same. It is a natural and automatic process. Rather, the wall of the pot had artificially created a separation in the otherwise uniform sky. Similarly, the creature’s pure conscious Atma residing in his gross body is the same as the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm that is all-pervading in this creation. The gross body of the creature is the one which separates this consciousness into two, and this creates an illusion that the creature’s Atma and Brahm are two different and separate entities. When the gross body is shed it is obvious that they merge with one another without any effort, and without leaving behind any trace of separation just like the space inside the pot merges with the space outside in a seamless manner when the pot is broken.]

Just like one is misled to believe that a given length of harmless rope is a fearful snake when seen from a distance, and this misconception is removed when the rope is examined from close quarters, the misconceptions about the world (that it is true and real) too vanish when one examines it from close quarters and comes to realise the truth about it (that it is illusionary, deluding, artificial, entrapping and misleading).

Likewise, the pure metal known as gold appears to be different from the ornaments made out of it in the first instance, but on close analysis and understanding this misconception is removed because the gold is inherent to all the golden ornaments, and the latter owe their very existence to the former. It is the gold that has been converted into

the ornament, and when the latter is melted it would revert back to gold. Without 'gold' there cannot ever be the existence of an ornament called 'golden'.

[When this principle is applied to this world having myriads of colourful forms and exceptional varieties of characters and features, we deduce that all these are simply multifarious manifestations of one single principal entity known as Brahm, the cosmic super Consciousness. When this world would finally come to an end, it would revert back to its principal source of origin, and it is the formless and shapeless Brahm. Just like the element 'gold' has no specific primary shape or form of its own but assumes the shape of the ornament, Brahm itself is formless and featureless but assumes the form of this world. Just as it is impossible to catch hold of the single atom of the metal gold in its primary and basic form of an 'atom of gold', it is similarly impossible to grasp 'Brahm' or 'Consciousness' in its primary and basic form. But once again, as the same gold in its physical and gross form can be easily grasped and moulded, the Brahm in its grosser form can be easily understood and seen. But this visible world is not the true identity of Brahm just like the external and visible form of the ornament is not the true identity of the atom of the metal known as 'gold'. Further, even as impurities are inherent in any ornament of gold and it would be foolhardy and stupid to accuse the pure atom of gold of having the same impurities as those possessed by the golden ornament, it is also most foolish and the height of ignorance to accuse Brahm of possessing the taints and faults that are inherent to this gross physical world. Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 17-18 which explicitly endorses this view.]

In this way when a man becomes wise, erudite and enlightened, or when these virtues arise in his inner-self and the mind gets illuminated, all Bhrams (delusions, misconceptions, falsehoods) about the world are dispelled.

So, it is from then (i.e. when I was blessed by the Goddess and became enlightened) that all my Bhrams have been removed and I have become Brahm-realised.

Oh Nidagh, follow my example and attain the eclectic knowledge that is true and spiritually elevating, that would remove all your confusions and consternations, and would illuminate your inner-self so that you become self-enlightened and Brahm-realised.' (16).

"Canto 2, verse no. 37 = The sky is inherently indivisible and immutable, remaining constant and complete in all dimensions of time. It cannot be shackled to anything or by anything, and therefore there is no question of it being freed or delivered from any fetters or bandages. The sky is so vast, fathomless and infinite that there are no dimensions that can be assigned to it. There is nothing that exists beyond the sky.

The cosmic Brahm possesses these unique virtues as those possessed by the sky. The sky is used as a metaphor to describe the divine and magnificent glories and divine attributes of Brahm. Hence, Brahm is similarly eternally free and without the need of getting any liberation and deliverance from any sort of bondage just like the sky. Brahm is the vast, all-incorporating and all-encompassing cosmic entity like the sky beyond which nothing exists. It is larger than the largest, and greater than the greatest. It is measureless and fathomless; its dimensions are better understood by the words 'eternal, infinite, without boundary, without a beginning and an end'. These virtues establish the greatness and universality of Brahm.

[In other words, Brahm is compared to the sky element and said to possess the grand virtues so characteristic of the latter. Of all the things in creation, the sky has the uniqueness of being the most subtle, infinite, formless, eternally free, all-pervading and all-encompassing universal element that just cannot be captured and put in shackles. The sky is not something gross and material as a piece of iron or gold that can be held and cut into small pieces. Similarly, Brahm is a cosmic divine and sublime entity that also has these eclectic virtues as the sky element, and therefore Brahm simply cannot be compartmentalized and divided into units that are separate from one another. Brahm cannot be limited to a specific area of creation, but it encloses the entire creation from all sides just like the sky that covers everything from all sides.

Like the sky element, Brahm too cannot be said to have two existences or a beginning and an end. That is why Brahm is said to be non-dual, immutable, indivisible, eternal and infinite.

Brahm is a divine and sublime cosmic entity that cannot be regarded as being under any bondage or fetter, and therefore it is eternally and inherently free and without any shackles of any kind whatsoever.

Everything in existence is present in the vast and fathomless bowls of the sky, and there is nothing that lies beyond it. Similarly, the entire creation is lodged in Brahm; nothing exists that is outside of Brahm. Brahm, as well as its analogue the sky, encloses the entire creation from the outside like a moat around a fort. It envelops the creation from all sides. Anything that encircles another thing from the outside cannot be surmounted by the one which it surrounds. In other words, nothing in this creation can supersede Brahm just like nothing can cross the limits and boundaries of the sky.] (37).

“Canto 4, verse no. 24 = A wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant who has completely annihilated (i.e. overcome, controlled and trained) the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) becomes free from all sorts of mental disturbances and restlessness. He is at peace with himself, and has attained tranquility and serenity. All his agonies, sorrows and miseries are naturally overcome, or they cease to exist for all practical purposes.

[The reason being that it is the mind and its sub-conscious that create all the problems associated with perceptions. A situation may be the cause of annoyance for one person, while another may be enjoying it. For instance, loud rock music may cause a headache to one person, while another person would be rolling in merriment in it. Lack of worldly material things may be a reason for a man to fret and fume, while for another it is so much the lesser burden on his head because he thinks that more things mean more botheration.]

Outwardly he may appear to be like a man who lacks interest in life, is stupid and mentally retarded, but inwardly he is calm and highly contented. He is like a man who is fast asleep in the Sushupta (deep sleep) state, for such a man is unbothered by what the world says and whatever is happening around him. Such a man would obviously be in a state of perpetual peace, tranquility and happiness.

He has risen to an exalted state of existence when he transcends the lower and the medium states of existences represented by the Tama and the Raja Gunas respectively. He has virtually abandoned them for good once he has experienced the quintessential sense of blessedness obtained by discarding the lower states of existence and establishing one's self in the highest state.

[In other words, he has raised himself to an exalted stature where all the qualities and virtues that are 'not the best' are abandoned. There are three Gunas—viz. Sata, Raja and Tama. The Sata is the best of the three, and regarded as the most auspicious and noble. It creates a desire in the creature to always look up and cultivate the best of qualities and virtues one can hope for. He endeavours to rise higher and higher in his spiritual life, and strives to reach the goal of emancipation and salvation. The Raja Guna is the second and medium quality which creates a desire for the world, not for reckless indulgence, self gratification and selfish motives but with a view to grow and develop along with the world at large. This may take a positive hue if the underlying pull of the Sata Guna is strong, and a negative hue if the Tama Guna has a greater pull. Finally, the Tama Guna is the least spiritually elevating, for it is very denigrating and demeaning for the soul. It is the grossest of the three Gunas and creates a natural tendency for vices and sins, making the creature very selfish and pervert.

In short, what this stanza implies is that a man who has controlled and properly trained his mind would pick and choose only the best virtues and qualities in life, those that would have a positive bearing on his life and general personality. He would always strive for the realisation of the ultimate state of blessedness marked by spiritual bliss and exemplary contentedness, he would always seek to find liberation and deliverance from this world, he would always attempt to find a way to break free from the endless cycle of birth and death along with the uncountable miseries and torments that are inherent in it and inseparable from it. For this, he would resolutely abandon the Raja and Tama Gunas, and instead focus on the Sata Guna.]

He would become one like the sky; he would assume an exalted stature that has the virtues of the sky inherent in it; he would live in this world like the sky lives in creation.

[In other words, he would attain a state of existence that has the unique characteristics of the sky, such as being uniform, immutable, steady, unmoved, untainted, calm, quiet and unfettered under all circumstances. When the Chitta is under control, the state of existence is compared to that of the sky.

The sky is the subtlest of the five elements of creation, the others being air/wind, fire/energy, water/liquid, and earth/solid. Like the sky, a man with a calmed mind and sub-conscious remains unruffled and unaffected by any of the numerous perceptions that the gross organs of the body constantly gather as impulses from the external world which is full of continuous turmoil, a world which is never at rest and never constant. All the noise, clamour and din of the hustle and bustle of life in the world are limited to the surface of the earth—a metaphor for grossness. As one rises higher and higher from the planes of the earth, say goes up a mountain, or rises up in the sky in an air-balloon for instance, this noise diminishes exponentially with the increase of height and distance from the earth till a point is reached when it is not heard at all.

This means that the sky—which is inherently subtle and absolutely quiet as is evident when one reaches its higher levels far away from the earth—acquires the character of grossness so typical to earth when it is in close proximity with the latter. As we move away from the earth and reach the areas of the sky deep in its bowls, we experience absolute stillness and calmness.

In the context of the present verse it means that a person who has controlled his Chitta and has driven it away from any involvement with either the body or the earth

would be able to bring the inherent shine out of a refined and tamed Chitta. A Chitta that is as far away as possible from the grossness of the world and the body, and as close as possible to the Atma which is pure consciousness is bound to replace its grossness of its earlier association with the body and the world with the subtleness and sublimity typical of the Atma.

Taken from another angle, this situation shows how and why the Chitta is able to give the Atma peace if it is far away from any involvement with the world and the body. As is well known, it is the Chitta consisting of the mind and sub-conscious that acts as a medium for the Atma to interact with the world through the medium of the sense organs of the body which the Chitta controls. So, if the Chitta is able to disconnect the link, the Atma would not be disturbed by anything of the world; the Atma would not even be aware of the very existence of the world in the first place. Hence, a controlled Chitta is a provider of peace, tranquility, bliss and happiness to the Atma of the creature. A controlled and trained Chitta acts like a shield that protects the sovereign from being unnecessarily perturbed by useless things in this life.

Therefore, a man with a tamed and trained mind can live peacefully and happily in this world amidst all the chaos and uproar that surround him without being bothered by any of them.]

When the Chitta is put under tight control, all vacillations cease; there is all-pervading calmness and quietude. This state resembles the state of the gross physical body that shows no movements and activities. In other words, it resembles the final conclusion of life—called the ‘Maha Anta’, the ‘great end’, the ‘final conclusion’. There is nothing left after the ‘final conclusion’.

[The phrase means an end to all the miseries and bewilderments that are a part of the normal life of a creature. When the Chitta is properly tamed and trained, the creature is able to obtain stability and focus in his life. He is able to save his vital energy and time from being frittered away in numerous perplexities and confusions associated with this mundane world of material sense objects, and instead concentrate on the Truth and Reality of existence on the one hand, and move steadily in the direction of attaining Mukti, or emancipation and salvation, on the other hand.] (24).

“Canto 5, verse no. 77 = The sky element is a uniform entity that is universal and immutable because it cannot be divided or fractioned or portioned. But the same sky is given different names according to the space it occupies—for instance, it is called ‘Ghataakash’ when it is present in the vacant space of a pot, and ‘Mahakash’ when it is considered in its cosmic form that is present outside the body of the pot. And, when the pot is broken, both the forms of the sky, viz. the Ghataakash and the Mahakash, become one and the same, having no separate existence or name. Hence one concludes that the different names assigned to the sky element is basically fallacious, and has its genesis in ignorance of the fundamental truth about the sky.

Similarly, the Atma is universally the same entity; it uniformly pervades throughout the creation, both at the micro level of an individual creature, as well as the macro level at the plane of creation or world at large. Therefore, to treat the Jiva (a living being; a creature) as being separate or different from Ishwar (the Supreme Being) is an erroneous idea based on fallacious premises and ignorance of the truth.

[The Atma is the same in all the creatures, and this Atma is nothing but pure consciousness that is an entity established as being divine, sublime, subtle, universal, uniform, immutable, indivisible, eternal, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. It is this same Atma that resides in the gross body of any given individual as well as in all other creatures in existence. This is the micro-level view of the Atma. At the cosmic level, it is the same Consciousness that exists at every level of creation; it is this Consciousness that is the cause of this creation, its development, growth, expansion, and its conclusion. Even after the end of one cycle of birth and death, it is this Consciousness that prevails, and then becomes the fountainhead from which the next cycle sprouts forth, and upon which it rests.

This Consciousness known as the Atma is the central pivot around which the whole wheel of creation revolves. This fact is elucidated in a number of Upanishads¹. Since the Atma is one and immutable, it is the same irrespective of the level or plane of creation in which it exists. Again, the Atma is pure consciousness and nothing else. Therefore it follows that there is no fundamental difference between the Jiva and Ishwar as both are the same ‘consciousness’ or Atma personified.

The treatment of an entity that is universally and indisputably ‘one’ and non-dual, i.e. which is never ‘two or more’, as having more than one forms or existences is indeed fallacious and extremely absurd.

Therefore, to treat the Jiva, the living being or the creature, and the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, as two distinct or separate entities is fallacious, erroneous and misconceived. This distinction or separation comes because one is not aware of the ‘truth and reality’, and is deluded to believe in the concept of duality or Dwaitya.

[Suppose we have different types of ornaments made of ‘gold’. A wise person is one who recognizes them all as ‘golden ornaments’, and not by their individual names, shapes or sizes, or even their usage. It is raw gold that has been crafted by the goldsmith into so many shapes and sizes, giving the same element known as ‘gold’ its myriad names and different market values. If ‘gold’ is removed from these ornaments, all of them lose their intrinsic value and inherent importance.

Similarly, everything in this creation—and that includes the Jiva—is a manifestation of Brahm. Since the Jiva is a living conscious entity that harbours the Atma, the pure consciousness, in its body, it has a special relationship with Brahm as the latter is the universal cosmic Consciousness that resides in each unit of creation. In other words, it is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that has transformed itself into the living being known as the Jiva. It is just like ‘gold’ being transformed into an ornament having a name other than ‘gold’.] (77).”

The significance and importance of the analogy of the sky from the perspective of metaphysics and spiritualism is narrated in the Atharva Veda’s *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse nos. 21-22 as follows—

“verse no. 21 = He who knows that Brahm is a universal entity that lives uniformly in all the creatures of this creation, he is the wise one who lives submerged in the thoughts of Brahm. He virtually assumes a form which is as limitless, infinite, imperishable and eternal as the great and majestic element known as the Param Vyom (the great and infinite sky, beyond which there is nothing).

[This is because Brahm has all the grand virtues possessed by the sky, and the latter is the nearest analogue of Brahm. In the Upanishads, Brahm is said to have a form and virtues as that possessed by the Vyom (sky). Brahm pervades the Vyom, and the Vyom is a manifestation of Brahm. Therefore, they are treated as being equivalent to each other. In the present context it means that when a man has become wise and enlightened enough to understand who he is and who is Brahm, he automatically assumes the virtues of Vyom, i.e. he becomes as open-minded, broad-viewed, large-hearted, welcoming, all-accepting but at the same time remaining neutral and indifferent to all things as the sky. He lacks nothing; he is fulfilled like the sky which harbours everything in this creation and therefore it (the sky) wants nothing.]

Think—‘I accept this fourth state of existence (i.e. the Turiya state of transcendental existence) which is equivalent to the ‘Brahm Yoni’—i.e. which can enlighten me about and make me acquainted with Brahm (the Supreme Being; the cosmic Consciousness) and the Truth of existence. I bow before such a great Brahm.’ [21].

“verse no. 22 = The sky is the ultimate source from which all the other elements of creation have emerged. All of them were conceived and developed in the cosmic crucible known as the ‘Akash’ (sky). All the Bhuts (elements; creatures) have emerged from the sky, and finally collapse and dissolve (vanish) into the sky. They take birth in the space provided by the sky and live in the space provided by the sky. [It is like the case of a servant serving the master. The master gives him his bread and butter, as well as provides him with living quarters.]

Hence, treat the ‘sky’ as the Beej (seed) of everything. [Since the sky and Brahm are one, it is a natural corollary that it is Brahm that is being indirectly called the ‘Beej’ or seed of everything in existence.]

Therefore, treat that ‘one entity’ (Brahm) as the Akash-peeth (sky), Vayu-peeth (air or wind), Tej-peeth (fire), Amrit-peeth (water) and Ratna-peeth (earth).

[The word ‘Peeth’ literally means a seat where a deity is consecrated. In the present context it implies that the supreme Deity known as Brahm is enshrined in all these five fundamental elements of creation. Since the rest of the creation is moulded out of these five primary elements that form the basic ingredients of creation, it follows that Brahm is subtly enshrined in each form that the elements took and in any ratio they combined. The earth is called the ‘Ratna-peeth’ to indicate that the earth is full of minerals and gems as well as with all the necessary things needed to sustain life. Water is called ‘Amrit’, meaning nectar and ambrosia of life, because it is the elixir without which no life is sustainable and imaginable in this world.]

He who knows this attains eternity. [That is, he becomes Brahm-realised.]

He who knows that this fourth dimension of knowledge, called the Turiya state of existence (i.e. the transcendental state of existence as emphasized in verse no. 11) which is related to the Lord Kaam-raj (i.e. the Lord who fulfills all desires and aspiration, here meaning spiritual aspirations of a seeker), actually pertains to the supreme transcendental Brahm who is honoured by the epithet of ‘Akshar’ (that which does not decay or perish)—only such a wise man is said to have truly understood the real meaning of the term Turiya, and what this state of existence is all about.

[In other words, he who knows the true meaning and essence of the fourth state of consciousness, known as the Turiya state of transcendental existence that provides

fulfillment of all spiritual desires, it is he alone who is able to know the imperishable and eternal form of Brahm. Such a man finds Mukti or liberation and deliverance. Such a man is truly wise, erudite, learned and enlightened; he is truly self-realised and Brahm-realised. This fact has been emphatically stressed in this entire Canto 5.]”

According to Vedanta, the concept of the *sky* or ‘Akash’ has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are *five* subtle skies representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or *Koshas* present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called ‘Panch Akash’. These are the following— (1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intellectual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref: Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

In metaphysics, the Sky element is divided into ten subtler components as follows depending upon the space that is being referred to—viz. (1) Ghataakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called ‘Swarga’ which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, analysis and to facilitate explanation of many esoteric concept of metaphysics, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

The fact that there is actually no difference between any two forms of the sky element, and that the various names are given to it to facilitate understanding and for the purpose of explaining esoteric metaphysical principles, has been explicitly endorsed in the *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 43. It expressly states—‘Just like the Ghataakash and Mathakash (the space present inside a hollow pot,

and the space inside the building of a monastery respectively) are imaginary and artificial segregations or partitions of the same Akash (the sky and its infinite stretch of space) which is fundamentally immutable, indivisible, uniform and universally all-pervading and all-encompassing by nature, the Supreme Being known as Brahm too is imagined to have two separate existences as Ishwar and Jiva. In fact, this artificial and imaginary distinction between the two manifestations of the same non-dual and immutable Supreme Being (Brahm) as the Ishwar and Jiva is due to ignorance about the truth and reality (43).

[Note—This is because both the Jiva and Ishwar are two sides of the same coin—one is at the gross and micro level of creation, and the other is at the sublime and macro level of creation, inspite of the fact that both have the same consciousness living inside them. That is, whereas Ishwar is the all-powerful, ethereal, macrocosmic, all-pervading and all-encompassing gross body of Brahm which has no physical barriers, the Jiva is the microcosmic gross body of the same Brahm as the individual creature with limitations of the gross body. The Ishwar is the nearest analogue to Brahm inasmuch as it is eternal, infinite, sublime, subtle, invisible, macrocosmic, universal and all-pervading in Nature, while the Jiva is mortal, gross and limited to his gross body. Both have the pure consciousness known as the soul or the Atma central to their existence. In the case of Ishwar, it is ‘cosmic Consciousness’, and in the case of the Jiva it is ‘individual consciousness’. So the difference between the duo—the Jiva and Ishwar—is only based on an erroneous perception of the truth. Once the correct perception is taken into consideration, the dichotomy vanishes—and this is called enlightenment and self-realisation. That is, if the ‘truthful’ identity of both is ‘consciousness’ and this consciousness is Brahm, then it follows that Jiva and Ishwar are the same. In other words, a self-realised individual who has known his true self is like an Ishwar personified.]

The *Taittiriyo-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Valli 3, Anuvak 6 says that Brahm and the extreme bliss obtained by Brahm-realisation are like the sky—eternal, infinite, indescribable and immeasurable. Both Brahm and Sky have similar unique virtues common to them, i.e. they are astoundingly vast, measureless and fathomless, being mystically all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-inclusive and omnipresent, being neutral and indifferent to all objects with numerous taints that are present in them because they are the habitat of the entire creation, and the irrefutable fact that they are pristine pure, absolutely incorruptible, extremely subtle and most sublime.

The *Paingalo-panishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, canto 4, verse nos.19-20 states that Brahm is like Akash and how the realised ascetic becomes one with the supreme Soul upon his death by citing the instance of the ‘Ghatakash’.

It says—“A truly realised and enlightened person called a Gyani dissolves himself and merges with the supreme transcendental entity (Brahm) wherever and however he dies because that supreme entity is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent like the sky (verse no. 19).

[Note--This is because for a true Gyani his body is not his true self but it is his Atma or pure consciousness which is another form of the supreme entity and has the same set of characteristics that that entity, known as Brahm, possesses. When such a man dies, he, as his Atma, rides upon the Pran or the vital winds present inside his body and simply leaves the latter and makes its exit from it just like a serpent leaving its old cuticle and effortlessly coming out of it.

Another interpretation is this—When such a wise man dies, then he simply discards his gross physical body. The sky or space present inside the body and the one outside it is

one uniform and inseparable element; it is the artificial boundary of the sac-like body that has created an artificial division between the two. So when this artificial demarcation is removed, it is but natural that the two skies become one. Further, a wise man is expected to know that Brahm and sky are synonymously treated because the former has all the attributes of the latter—it is immutable, immanent, omnipresent, all-pervading, pure and untainted, vast and fathomless, infinite and eternal. The air fills the sky and the second element after the sky that is nearest analogue for Brahm, for it is the air the sound called the cosmic Naad or the divine ethereal sound of cosmic music of creation that made its presence felt before the visible creation came into being. Pran or the ‘vital spark of life’ is a name given to the air element present inside the creature that gives the body its much needed life and vitality.

Therefore, when he dies, his Pran simply coalesces with the air present outside his body, and his Atma present in the subtle sky of the heart, known as the Hridya-akash, simply merges with the supreme all-pervading Atma present in the sky outside the body because the limiting and segregating boundary of the body has now been removed.]

Even as the limited space present inside the mud pot is called ‘Ghataakash’ just to identify it for hypothetical purposes and it becomes one with the space outside when the pot is broken, because it is essentially no different from the vast and fathomless sky present outside the pot, the wise Yogi (ascetic or hermit) who has become truly enlightened and acquires the truthful knowledge of the reality, is able to access that supreme, immutable and infinite state of existence characterised by being without any form or shape, and which has or does not need any support for itself. This state is called ‘Gyan Loka’ or the abode marked by the state of existence where there is truthful awareness of reality, where there is truthful knowledge, where there is erudition and wisdom, where there is the light of self-realisation, and which is infinite, formless and all-pervading as the sky. Such an abode symbolises a treasury of Gyan, and hence it is called a Gyan Loka, and its inhabitant is Brahm who is Gyan personified (verse no. 20).”

According to some Upanishads, there are *five subtle divisions of the sky* as follows—The sky is the subtlest of the five elements (the others being air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth) in creation. Basically sky is indivisible and uniform, but for the purpose of study it has been hypothetically divided into five components or sections. These divisions of the physical sky are based upon the different forms it appears in with respect to an observer on earth. These divisions are then used to draw parallel with various metaphysical concepts in order to bring out the subtle differences between these concepts clearly and make them comprehensible. These hypothetical divisions are therefore used as metaphors for the purpose of study and comprehension, and not to suggest that the sky can be actually divided.

Now, technically the *Akash* is the first form of the sky just above the surface of the earth, the sky which is infinite, fathomless, measureless and eternal, the sky which appears bright during the day time as if it has its own illumination radiating from it, the sky which is dotted by so many things that are extraneous to it but appear to be an integral part of it, the sky which is there but cannot be touched, felt, smelled and tasted but only witnessed, but technically not ‘seen’ because something that is vacant cannot be seen had it not been for the impurities present in it, the sky which appears to have a wide variety of colours like a multi-coloured canvas but is fundamentally colourless, and the sky which is fundamentally pure and uncorrupt and untainted by any of these things.

Therefore, this word 'Akash' is a hypothetical division of the immutable sky which is used as a metaphor to describe some aspect of metaphysics.

The second division of the sky is the *Paramakash* which is the sky seen during the night time. This portion of the sky is dotted by stars and is not totally dark because of the light reflected from the twinkling of the stars as well as the presence of the moon, the reflected light from the earth's lighted side and other celestial bodies that reflect sun's light.

The third division of the sky is the *Mahakash* which is the greater sky just like we have a city and its outer suburban out lying areas called the greater city area. This sky is the vast space beyond the solar system, and stretches into the deep recesses of the cosmos, and it includes the inter-galactic space. Obviously this is like hell where there is no trace of life and if any one goes there, even hypothetically, then he just gets lost to humanity. It sure is burning with hellish fire of cosmic explosions where new stars are continuously being born and destroyed, where new galaxies are formed and old ones get annihilated, where suns explode into black holes and supernovas create immense cauldrons of unimaginable heat and energy.

The fourth division of the sky is the *Tattwakash* which refers, as the name suggests, to the essential form of the sky element which is the subtlest form of the five elements created in creation and has, inter alia, such virtues as being infinite, eternal, immutable, immaculate, omnipresent, all pervading, all encompassing, fathomless, measureless etc.

Lastly, the fifth division of the sky is called the *Suryakash* or that portion of the sky that surrounds the celestial Sun. It is therefore as radiant and splendorous as the sun itself, and it is almost impossible to see it with naked eyes. The brightest object in the heavens, the Sun, is present here, and as is well known this Sun is a metaphor for a number of things, such as life as well as the light of knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and erudition, and therefore for the supreme transcendental Brahm. In fact this Brahm possesses all the virtues displayed by the sky, and therefore the latter is usually used as a metaphor for Brahm, though this Brahm's virtues are not limited to the ones displayed by the sky which forms only a fraction of all the virtues possessed by Brahm.

References—(i) Shukla Yajur Veda's *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahman 1, section 2, verse nos. 11-13, Brahman 2, section 1, verse no. 5, and Brahman 4, section 1, verse no.1-4; *Advai Tarak Upanishad*, verse no. 7; *Brihad Aranyak Upanishad*, Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 1-6. (ii) Sam Veda's *Chandogya Upanishad*, Canto 7, section 12. (iii) Atharva Veda's *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 5.

The *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahman 1, section 2, verse nos. 11-13, and Brahman 4, section 1, verse no.1-4, says that these *five* subtle skies are the following—(1) Akash—the vacant space above the earth that has no light of its own, and it is dark and neutral from within and without; (2) Parakash—the space that burns with a fire like that of hell from within and without; (3) Mahakash—that space which is radiant with a divine glow that effuses from within it and permeates everywhere within its jurisdiction; (4) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; it is aglow with the splendour and radiance of the sun; and (5) Paramakash—that space which is brilliantly illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity.

Now let us see what this Upanishad has to say on the subject.

Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/2/11-13—

“Verse no. 11-12 = The medium range of Yogic vision is like visualizing the sky in the morning hours when the sun, the moon and the fire of the sun are not there. That is, the sky is aglow with a diffused light that pervades it uniformly from all sides. From where this light comes (i.e. either the sun or the moon) is not visible¹. This sky appears to be vast and endless. With this view or vision, the ascetic symbolically becomes one like it—i.e. he also becomes one who has no end; his vision of life and his perceptions of the world become holistic and all-inclusive; his mind and intellect become lighted uniformly with the light of self-realisation which glows to dispel the darkness of ignorance much like the diffused early morning light in the sky that removes the darkness of the preceding night (11-12).

[Note—¹In the early morning sky at the time of dawn, neither the sun nor the moon are visible. The light that prevails at that time goes on getting brighter by the minute and the hour. Its appearance has removed the darkness of the past night. All these have symbolic significance here. Like the non-visibility of the source of light, Brahm is also not visible. But even as there cannot be the morning light without the presence of the self-illuminated and brilliant sun just round the corner, there cannot be existence and life, there cannot be consciousness and knowledge without the presence of Brahm just about to make its appearance if the aspirant has perseverance and patience to wait and welcome the experience of Brahm realisation just like a man who has to wait for a little more time for the sun to make its appearance with all its glorious splendour.

The sky appears calm and refreshingly quiet in the morning. The sky is an entity which is without an end. Similarly, a Yogi who has successfully realised Brahm becomes as calm and as infinite as the sky.

Again, as the light of the morning sky gradually goes on increasing, the spiritual enlightenment and divine energy of a Yogi also goes on enhancing by the day.

The divine halo that surrounds the Yogi is diffused like the light of the early morning sky—soothing, effusing in all its glory, and illuminating for others, removing their darkness symbolised by delusions and other faults associated with this world.]

“Verse no. 13 = [In this verse, the Sun God describes the other four subtle skies from the perspective of metaphysics.]

With due diligent practice, the aspirant Yogi (ascetic) becomes without any faults or blemishes that taint ordinary people; he goes beyond or transcends the reach of the three Gunas or qualities (which are Sata, Raja and Tama), and he becomes one like the sky called ‘Akash’, which is the sky present just above the earth. [That is, he acquires virtues which are similar to the ones possessed by the sky]¹

With greater diligence, perseverance and practice, he becomes one like the deep recesses of the space which has bright stars in it². This sky is called ‘Parakash’, or the sky which is beyond the ordinary sky or the one which transcends the normal definition of the sky.

Beyond it is the sky lit by a brilliant light called ‘Kalagni’ which resembles the light that appears at the time of dooms-day. That is, there is total darkness here, symbolising total peace and elimination of all awareness of the existence of tormenting life in this mortal world. This sky is called ‘Mahakash’³.

After that is the sky called the ‘Tattwakash’⁴, literally meaning the essential or the principal factor that is at the core of the sky element and acts as its defining virtue. It

symbolises the presence of the essential Truth, called the Tattwa, in the form of the fundamental virtues that characterise the qualities displayed by the sky.

And finally there is the sky which is radiant and splendorous with the light of millions of suns, and it is called 'Suryakash'⁵. [Brahm or the 'Truth' actually symbolically resides here. A parallel is drawn between the place where the self-illuminated Brahm resides and the sky where the splendorous sun lives to highlight the fact that just like the presence of the visible sun cannot be denied, the presence of Brahm too cannot be denied; just like the sun that illuminates the dark and fathomless bowls of the sky, the Brahm also illuminates the entire creation with its consciousness. The only practical difference between the physical sun and Brahm is the fact that the former (sun) can be perceived at the physical gross level of existence by means of seeing it with the eyes of the gross body while the latter (Brahm) can only be realised at the subtle level of consciousness. What the sun is to the gross visible world, Brahm is to the subtle invisible world. If the sun is 'true', then Brahm is also 'true'.] (13).

[Note--¹The sky is unattached with, and to, anything. It is an independent entity which harbours and surrounds everything in creation but still remains absolutely detached from all of them. Its closest analogue is the air element that fills every pore of creation but still remains different from its surroundings. It ought to be noted here that sky is the subtler of the two elements, the sky and the air, and it is the 'sky' that contains the air and not vice versa. In this context we can visualize the sky as the invisible vessel that is filled by air, another invisible element, and it is not the other way round.

The sky is illuminated during the day and it is the path through which the chariot of the Sun God passes. At night, the same sky is illuminated by the moon and adorned by the stars which appear like so many jewels spread across the vast sheet of the sky. The sky harbours so many varieties of life, such as birds and insects and other sky borne creatures of different species; all trees and plants grow up towards the sky, and they bloom in the sky, because if a flowering plant is closed in a box, it would wither away and die. The sky remains free from any taints and blemishes though it has so many colours that keep on changing their hues, but these are not the actual colours of the sky but are caused by scattering of the sunlight by the dust particles or moisture present in the air; the presence of innumerable heavenly bodies and debris do not affect the sky, nor do the presence of dark cloud darken the sky or the presence of the sun or the moon actually cause any change in the nature of the sky, for as soon as they set, the sky reverts to its original state of blankness and neutrality. Likewise, the Yogi remains the same no matter which circumstance he finds himself in; he remains uniform, even, calm, unruffled and taintless.

²The ascetic is compared to the Parakash to signify the fact that he has depth of vision and has reached much higher in his spiritual pursuits where light is pure consciousness automatically effuses from him.

³With progress of his practice, the ascetic is able to reach the state of perpetual Samadhi wherein the awareness of the visible world is totally eliminated. For all practical purposes, the world has become dark and dead for him. There is a complete silence of death around him. This is a metaphor for his state of mind that has ceased to exist vis-à-vis the external world.

⁴This sky is where the ascetic has an experience of the sky element; it also might refer to the state of consciousness when the ascetic realises the essential elements in their primary forms. This state is just before his one-on-one vision of the ultimate element—viz. the Truth, known as Brahm. This happens in the next sky.

⁵When he becomes more evolved in his yogic practice, the ascetic experiences a burst of divine light about him. This light is blinding and dazzling like the light of the heavenly sun; it is the light of self-realisation and symbolic of the realisation or witnessing of Brahm first hand.]”

Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/1/5—“[The various Mandals or subtle divisions of the sky that are discernible by a Yogi while he meditates by the Shambhavi Mudra are described in this verse. This Mudra or sitting posture is briefly described in Brahman 1, section 3, verse nos. 4-5 as well as in Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 1.]

The first division of the sky or space outside the body is called ‘Agni Mandal’ (or the sky or the Firmament which has the fire element present in it as its integral part; this is the sky just above the earth’s surface because it is here one feels hot, and it is in the atmosphere of the earth that fire can be lit).

The second division beyond it is called ‘Surya Mandal’ (or the sky where the splendorous sun is located; the solar space of the entire solar system).

In the center of this (i.e. in the middle of the solar system) is the sky where the nectar-like (i.e. soothing and peace providing) moon is located. The sky around the moon is called the ‘Chandra Mandal’.

Located in it is the glorious and magnificent abode of the eternal, immutable and truthful Brahm which is radiant, splendorous and brightly illuminated. It is called ‘Brahm Mandal’, and it has the dazzling illumination that resembles a bright streak of lightening.

These divisions of the sky are visible during the meditative posture known as Shambhavi Mudra (5).

[Note—During the meditation posture called Sambhavi Mudra, the ascetic observes these subtle skies and their changing colours. First he sees a raging fire, then it changes into a ball of fire resembling the sun, then this ball cools down to resemble the disc of the moon, and finally this metamorphoses into a flickering filament of intense dynamic energy with the intensity of an electric discharge.]

Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 4/1/1-4—“Verse no. 1 = After that, sage Yagyavalkya asked the divine Purush or the Lord present in the splendorous halo around the sun, ‘Please tell me about the characteristic features of the ‘Vyom-Panchak’, or the five forms of subtle skies’. [See also Brahman 1, Section 2, verse no. 13 in this context.] (1).

“Verse no. 2 = That Purush replied that the sky has five subtle forms or categories—viz. Akash, Parakash, Mahakash, Suryakash and Paramakash (2).

“Verse no. 3 = ‘Akash’ is that sky or space which is completely dark from within and without (because it is the space just above the surface of the earth and has no light of its own). ‘Parakash’ is that sky or space which is like the fire of death at the time of dooms day, or like the fire of hell. ‘Mahakash’ is that sky element which is full of immeasurable radiance and splendour from within and without (and is therefore has the opposite characteristic as that of the Akash). ‘Suryakash’ is that sky or space that resembles the dazzle and splendour of the sun (because it is in the vicinity of the latter). Finally, the ‘Paramakash’ is that sky which is indescribably bright, all pervading and all encompassing, and is an abode of immense bliss, joy and happiness (because it is the subtle sky where the supreme transcendental Brahm, who possesses all these characteristics displayed by this sky, is present) (3).

“Verse no. 4 = A person is definitely affected by the object which is the target of his attention and mental focus (4).

[Note—This is because he constantly, consistently and persistently thinks about this ideal, his goal, and this thinking affects him at his sub-conscious and psychological level. So he acquires certain traits that are inherently possessed by his object of adoration. He would begin to see the world with a vision that is conditioned by the way his sub-conscious and psychology has been affected by constant thoughts of the object that he adores and worships. There is a lot of symbolism here.

For example, if he has a narrow-minded view and limited knowledge of spiritualism and metaphysics, and perceives the creation as limited to the gross mortal creation upon this earth, then the sky just above the earth, called the ‘Akash’, becomes his horizon and he cannot see beyond it, remaining submerged in something that is dark, and would therefore remain enveloped in the veil of darkness of ignorance.

If he perceives the sky as a place where the hell is located, i.e. if his understanding of the sky element is limited by the view that the sky is symbolised by the ‘Parakash’ which is nothing but hell where people go after death to suffer for their deeds, then he remains submerged in sorrows, sufferings, pains and miseries for the entire length of his life.

On the contrary, if he is wise and sees the sky as one of the five elements of creation, i.e. as the ‘Mahakash’, then he becomes as majestic, pure, glorious and radiant as the sky element. That is, he shines in his wisdom and erudition, his sagacity and enlightenment.

If his ideal is the sky which has the qualities of the sun, i.e. the Suryakash, then also he shines like the sun, giving light to others by his wisdom and erudition, by his knowledge and sane advice, showing them the righteous and auspicious path to liberation and deliverance just like the sun lights up the world by its light and shows the path to everyone who wish to go somewhere. Besides this, he remains alert and active as a man is during the day time, as opposed to the night hours when he is supposed to sleep.

Finally, if he worships the sky as the ‘Paramakash’, i.e. as the sky which is radiant from the radiance effusing from the supreme Brahm residing in it, then he is sure to become one like that Brahm himself. He too would become eternal and glorious as Brahm, he too would have a vast vision and develop a holistic view of this creation, and he too would be endowed with such qualities as equanimity, fortitude, magnanimity etc. that are the hallmarks of someone who is really holy, pious and divine.]”

According to *Advai Tarak Upanishad*, verse no. 7 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are five divisions of the sky that represent the infinite virtues of Brahm in a symbolic manner. These skies are the following—(1) the sky at the time of sun rise—viz, the sun with a rounded, brilliantly splendid disc, having the fierceness and radiance like that of the fiercely burning fire—is able to achieve a similarly exalted stature. He becomes an image of that ‘Akash’ or the sky itself where the brilliant sun is seen. (2) The next sky that is described now is the dark sky before the sun rises, the pre-dawn sky. It is filled with twinkling stars that give the dark sky its soft and subtle hue of light. This sky is called the ‘Paramakash’. (3) The third subtle sky is called ‘Mahakash’ and it is dazzling like the fire of Kaal, or the fire of dooms day. (4) The fourth sky is called ‘Tattwakash’, or the sky that surrounds the essential and ultimate universal Truth. This sky is considered as the best subtle space because it surrounds and harbours the ‘truth’, and is therefore suffused with a brilliant light. This sky forms the outer periphery of the next sky. (5) Finally, the fifth subtle sky is called the ‘Suryakash’, and it is brilliant and splendid as if there were millions of suns in it.

When these hypothetical divisions are used as metaphors to describe Brahm, they acquire a mystical interpretation. For example, with relevance the five forms of skies as described in Advai Tarak Upanishad, the interpretation is as follows—A person who has wisdom and erudition to perceive Brahm as having the stupendous glory, radiance, splendour and energy as that possessed by the sun, the potentials and powers of fire, the life creating, sustaining and annihilating powers possessed both by the sun and the fire, and having the attributes of the sky—such as being fathomless, measureless, vast, subtlest of the five elements of creation, incorruptible, inherently spotless inspite of the presence of so many impurities, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, eternal and infinite etc.—becomes enlightened and exalted in his mental stature. Such a man stands out amongst his compatriots and peers, and is honoured and lauded for his wisdom and enlightenment. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he becomes one like the sky element called Akash, and he remains firm in his convictions about Brahm and steadfastly established with the attributes of the sky. He is deemed to be as exalted and honourable as Brahm having the attributes of the sky element.

There is another interpretation to this verse. By realising Brahm, the ascetic acquires a divine halo around him which resembles the bright disc of the sun as it is seen during the day in the sky. His enlightenment and wisdom glow and emanate light which is enjoyed by others; they benefit from his presence amongst them.

Though the *Parmakash* representing the night sky appears to be dark and blank, it is actually not completely dark as the stars lend their light to it. The ascetic who is enlightened and realised represents the Parmakash because he seems to be bland, blank and disinterested in anything, but this is only a superficial view because darkness of the sky here does not mean ignorance or delusion but of remaining oblivious to all the corrupting influences of the world that might taint an ascetic's mind and heart. His apparently bland and blank heart and mind are twinkling with numerous gems of wisdom which are highlighted only when the dazzle of the sun symbolising the various charms of the world are eliminated. This metaphor of the stars in the background of the dark sky is a brilliant depiction of the vast possibilities and potentials that unfold themselves before a Brahm realised person. This person has a clean slate like the canopy of the dark sky, but the vast treasury of wisdom and enlightenment that he has is likened to the uncountable stars in the dark canopy of the night sky.

The ascetic acquires such mystical powers as represented by the *Mahakash*, and he can even cause destruction and death if he so wishes.

This *Tattwakash* is the sky that surrounds the transcendental and supreme Truth in creation, which is Brahm, and forms the peripheral sky around the central core. The self-illuminated Brahm is the source of all light in creation just like the celestial sun which is self-illuminated and which lights up the length and breadth of the sky of the solar system. If an ordinary sun has this potential and power, then one can imagine and expect innumerable times more from that authority that has created this sun in the first place and has given it its powers and potentials. After all, even modern science has established that our sun is not the only sun in the universe, and there is uncountable number of suns scattered in the bowl of the cosmos, some still in the nascent stage while others on the verge of extinction. So it is easy to visualise that Brahm which is at the core of this stupendous cosmic cauldron if we were to take only a physical stand on Brahm. From the metaphysical view point, this Brahm is the supreme authority in creation and

the Soul of it. It is Brahm that drives this dynamo known as the creation. Therefore the sky or space where it is located is also glowing with the light that emanates from it much like the sky around the celestial sun. When the ascetic has realised Brahm, his inner self also glows with the divine light of self enlightenment, and it becomes as radiant and glorious as the sky around Brahm, because this Brahm is present in his very own self. The whole body of such a realised ascetic becomes radiant and glorious like this sky.

Finally we have the *Suryakash* or that sky that is in the immediate vicinity and in the presence of that stupendous fount of divine energy known as Brahm. This sky forms the inner ring or layer that immediately surrounds Brahm, and therefore it is natural that it is more dazzlingly bright than the other skies that are not so close, and it has a brightness that resembles the blinding light of millions of suns just like the immediate space around the celestial sun. This immediate sky of the sun just cannot be seen by a naked eye, it is impossible to do so, because it would burn the eyes, whereas it is possible to see the sky at a distance from the sun. Similarly, the ascetic's inner core is dazzlingly bright with the light of self-realisation and enlightenment. All other lights, or all other knowledge and all other ways of attaining Brahm pale into insignificance when this light is witnessed by the ascetic in his own bosom.

The skies have also been described in *Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad*, 1/5-8 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

According to *Brihad Aranyak Upanishad*, Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 1-6, the *Akash* or the sky/space element is the Pratistha or established fame and glory of Brahm. It is a well established tenet of Vedanta that Brahm is synonymous with the Akash and is uniformly diffused throughout the sky so much so that it is impossible to segregate them much like it is impossible to separate salt after it is dissolved in water. The unique qualities of Brahm and Akash are similar as follows—they are infinite, eternal, uncorrupt, pristine pure, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. The sky element is the nearest analogue to Brahm because it is the subtlest of the five elements in creation. Everything in creation came into being in the bowl of the sky, lives in this bowl and would perish in it, but this sky would be there even after that. All these unique attributes of the sky are like the grand attributes of Brahm on display, making the Akash the Pratistha of Brahm.

Please also refer to 1/5/12; 2/1/5; 2/3/2-5; 2/5/10; 3/7/8.12; 3/8/3-11; 3/9/13 of Brihad Aranyak Upahishad.

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 5 describes the importance of the Akash or sky as follows—"The Akash (sky) is the place which gives refuge and support to all the creatures. All the creatures have their origin in the sky; they develop, grow and expand or spread in the vast fathomless realm of the sky, and ultimately collapse into and vanish in the sky.

This is why it is said that the sky is the 'Beej' or seed from which the entire creation has emerged (5).

[Note—This is because everything that is born needs space to grow and develop. The origin of this creation too took place in the vast bowl of the cosmic space. The sky acted as the huge crucible where the cosmos was conceived, where it developed and grew, and in which it lives. At the end it would collapse into the sky much like a wave which originates from the surface of the ocean, develops and grows and spread

on the surface of the ocean, and finally collapses into the same ocean. In other words, everything that has come into being exists in the space of the sky; nothing exists beyond the limits of the sky. The sky is boundless, endless and without limits. Therefore, it is an apt synonym for Brahm.]”

The concept of the Sky element or the Akash Tattva has also been elaborately described in *Chandogya Upanishad*, Canto 7, section 12 of the Sam Veda as follows—

“Verse no. 1 = Sage Sankadi said to Narad, ‘Akash (sky or space) is superior to Tej¹ (fire or energy). It is in the ‘Akash’ (sky/space) that the sun, the moon, the lightening, the stars and the elementary fire is established. We use the medium of the sky/space to call each other and hear each other (because sound waves travel in space). It is the sky/space through which the echo travels (because of the same reason)². It is in the sky/space that either all the activities take place or don’t take place.

[That is, everything exists in the space. There are only two plains of existence in this creation—one is solid like the earth and another is the space outside the earth. The word ‘Akash’ covers the entire space from the top of the surface of the earth which gives a habitat to all the creatures, right up to the farthest point of the cosmos.]

Everything has its origin in the sky/space as is evident when all the seeds of plants sprout and move upwards towards the sky/space (instead of going downwards into the soil. It is the root of the plant which goes down, but the stem and the leaves move upwards facing the space or sky)³. Similarly, all the creatures look upwards facing the sky when they take birth (instead of facing downwards)⁴.

Hence, oh Narad, it is the ‘Akash’ (sky/space) that you must worship, adore, admire, honour, revere and praise (more than the Tej and its preceeding entities because the sky element is the most subtle and possesses higher ethereal virtues and attributes than the rest of them)⁵ (1).

[Note :- (i) ¹The *Tej*, which is a word incorporating in its ambit such entities as lightening and fire as well as such virtues as majesty, radiance, glory and splendour, is subordinate in importance to *Akash* (space or sky) because the latter has ‘Tej’ as one of its various constituents. For example, a fire needs open space to burn and leap into a flame. The others being sun, moon, stars etc.. The ‘Tej’ element present in the sun is also a part of ‘Akash’ because it is in ‘Akash’ that both the sun and its ‘Tej’ (energy and splendour) reside. All of the celestial bodies mentioned here —such as the sun, the moon and the stars —have Tej or ‘light’ in them in varying degrees, and they are like small specks or moderate sized dust particles strewn on the vast beach that constitute the sky or space element of creation. The extension, dimension and domain of the space or sky are millions of times larger than these entities.

(ii) ²We know that sound travels in a medium, and the medium it uses in the atmosphere of the earth is air, while ether is the medium in space. Air fills the entire space from the rocky surface of the earth to the highest reaches of the atmosphere. Whenever we speak, or whenever there is an echo, the sound waves travel through space —there is no solid medium or obstruction or wall between the point of origin of the sound and the place where it bounces off to form an echo, for otherwise we won’t hear an echo.

(iii) ³Similarly, all seeds germinate and the shoot goes upwards towards the sky showing their inclination to rise and reach towards the parent from whom they have descended on this earth.

(iv) ⁴We stand on the surface of the earth but except the underneath part of our foot, i.e., the sole which is on the ground facing the earth and helping us to fix our body on the earth and stand on it, the rest of the body is above the surface of the earth and symbolically in the 'space above the surface, standing in the sky, facing upwards'. The space immediately above the surface of the earth occupies the rest of the body. When a child is born, it lies on the bed with the face upwards and not downwards, for in the latter case it would suffocate to death. The area of the sky in our immediate vicinity is the same as the distant space of the sky; there is no physical barrier between the space immediately surrounding us, and say, a point in the sky 10 thousand miles away, and by extension even in the deep recesses of the inter galactic space. The various names given to the layers of the sky, extending from the surface of the earth right up to the farthest point of the cosmos, are only imaginary conceptions of a man just in order to aid comprehension and delineate the sky into various segments for easy understanding and learning. The sky, however, is indivisible.

(v) ⁵The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.]

“Verse no. 2 = A person who worships and adores ‘Akash’ as a manifestation of Brahm, or as having some of the attributes that are possessed by Brahm, is blessed with radiance, glory, splendour, majesty and enlightenment represented by illumination present in the ‘Akash’.

[That is, the person seeks the illumination of enlightenment and wisdom like the illumination, radiance and splendour of the sun and the bright light of the moon present in the sky by worshipping, adoring and praising these virtues or qualities of the sky which are also one of the virtues and qualities of Brahm.]

He possesses the attribute of ‘Akash’ (such as being vast, measureless, fathomless, eternal, infinite, peaceful, calm, stable, all encompassing and all covering, and having the glorious qualities and radiant characteristics of the constituent heavenly bodies which form of a part of the sky, such as the sun, the moon and the stars). Such a person remains free from pains and sorrows; he achieves a realm similar to that of ‘Akash’ (i.e., his glory and fame extends to cover the vast realm of the earth). If he so wills, his reach extends infinitely as far as the sky or space extends.

[That is, his wisdom, knowledge, erudition, scholarship, expertise and enlightenment become all-encompassing as they seem to cover all possible bodies of knowledge that this creation possesses, and they learn and know about anything that is worth learning or knowing. Nothing, no knowledge, no wisdom, no scholarship, no skill, no art or craft is beyond their reach]’.

And therefore their fame extends from horizon to horizon. (2)”

(b) The Air/Vital Wind element or PRAN (pronounced as “Praan”)—

Dictionary defines ‘Pran’ as the life-giving and life-sustaining breath, the inhaled and exhaled wind, the breath of life, life itself, one of the five chief vital winds or airs that sustain life, strength, valour, courage, energy, vitality, vigour. It is also synonymous with the fire element as well as with the supreme soul or Atma.

It is the ‘fire element’ because both the fire as well as the Pran inject and infuse life into the otherwise lifeless and inane gross body of a creature, enabling it to get up and perform its functions and carry on with its activities. A dead body from which ‘life’ has exited becomes cold and lifeless, thereby indicating that the fire element that is inherently present in it has been extinguished—we then declare that the body is dead. As long as the Pran or life factor remains inside the body, the body remains warm. As soon as the Pran makes its exit from it, the body cools down. A dead body is cold, while a living body is warm.

The word ‘fire’ is also synonymous with energy and vitality. All living beings have this characteristic in varying proportions. And an entity is a ‘living being’ only till it has ‘Pran’ in it.

The ‘Pran’ literally means the life of all living beings, so called because the Pran injects life and consciousness in the otherwise lifeless body of the organism. It is the vital life-consciousness present in the body of an individual creature. It is represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive, and distinguishes a living body from a dead one. The word ‘Pran’ is usually associated with the vital winds of the body as it is these winds that keep the body active and alive. The Pran is sometimes used synonymously with the Atma or soul of the creature because both are equally important for a creature’s existence. Whereas Pran is a synonym of life and vitality, Atma stands for the consciousness present in the body. Hence both are like the two sides of the same coin called the living being.

Though technically Atma or soul is pure consciousness while Pran is a vital wind or air element, practically they are synonymous with each other. An illustration will clear this point. Suppose a man has lost senses in his limbs—they have been paralysed, or he is lying unconscious due to some serious disease. We regard such a man as alive and not as dead as long as he continues to breathe, and as long as he breathes, or as long as he is technically ‘alive’ his Atma is deemed to be inside his body, because the true identity or the true self of a man is not his physical body but his Atma. Therefore we do not regard the ‘unconscious’ body as dead. But when he actually dies, that is, when he stops to breathe, we say that ‘his Pran’ has left the body, and that ‘he’ has died. Now, who has died? It is the person whose Pran has left the body; and the person is the ‘self’ or the Atma which has left the body when the Pran made its exit from it at the time of death.

This is because Pran and Atma depend on each other so much so that as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the Atma also leaves the body and we say that the person is no more. Why do we say that the 'person is no more' when the body is actually lying in front of us? It is because the 'person' is the Atma and not the body, and this Atma has left the body with the Pran at the time of death. When the proper time comes, the Atma leaves the body astride the Pran, riding piggy back on it.

The five main vital winds are Pran, Apaana, Vyana, Udaana and Samana. Amongst them, the Pran refers to the breath which injects the vital spark of life in a body to keep it alive and active, thereby providing it with the necessary impetus, the energy, vitality and strength to perform its designated functions and duties as a living entity. All the other vital winds are of any relevance and significance only as long as there is Pran in the body for the simple reason that if the body stops breathing it would die, and the dead body has neither the need for the other winds nor are they competent enough to keep it alive relying on their own strength. At the same time, all these vital winds are collectively called Pran because they work in tandem with each other to enable the main Pran, the breath, to actually carry out its function. These vital winds do not exist in separate so-called water tight compartments, as this is an incredulous proposition because air is an element that cannot be compartmentalized into separate entities having distinct existences, but they are named as separate winds just for the academic purpose of studying the way the vital wind or air functions differently in the body to enable it to carry on with its functions. So these other 'Prans' or vital winds besides the breath, both inhaled and exhaled, are the following—Apaana, Vyana, Udaana and Samana.

So we see that the term 'Pran' is usually applied to breath because it is the vital wind force that injects and sustains life and vitality in a creature. It is synonymous with life, Atma and soul of a living creature. The presence of Pran determines whether a creature is dead or alive; it is a distinguishing factor between the animate and inanimate world. Pran is the essential vibrations of life; it is the rhythm of life; it is the essential characteristic that defines life.

The inherent tendency of the Pran, which is the vital wind residing in the upper part of the body between the heart-lungs and the nose, is to lift the creature to a higher state of noble, righteous, virtuous, auspicious and spiritual existence, to become wise and enlightened. On the contrary, the Apaana winds live in the intestine and pass down through the anus. It symbolises the downward drag on the creature's spiritual upliftment, pulling it down towards the grosser aspects of creation and the materialistic world which is not only gross but also filthy and worthless like the excretory matters present in the intestine. It also symbolises passions, evils, vices, perversion and attachments to the worldly things at large, and their accompanying perplexities, bewilderments and hassles leading to restlessness and moral turpitude and degradation. This oscillation between the spiritual upliftment and moving upwards towards goodness, and spiritual degradation, moving downwards towards the gross world of sensual pleasures, leads a creature to a continuous cycle of birth and death—this oscillation is like the bouncing of a ball upwards and downwards from the surface of the earth. One must remember that a lot of symbolism, metaphors and allegories have been used in the Upanishad texts to explain things. One should be wise not to lose the spirit while getting bogged down by the literal meaning of the words; one should not lose the wood while searching for the tree. The 'Pran' wind here symbolises the upward drift which the pure consciousness is inherently

inclined to, while the 'Apan' winds pulls it down towards the attractions of the world. The creature remains trapped between the two forces.

This 'vital wind' called Pran is one of the five elements of creation, called the Panch Bhuts, the others being earth, water, fire and sky.

The Atharva Veda's *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 2 explicitly asserts that *Pran* is a synonym for 'consciousness', and therefore for the Atma which is also the pure consciousness residing in the gross body of the living being. Since the cosmic aspect of the 'consciousness' is known as Brahm, Pran is also synonym for Brahm.

The Atharva Veda's *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, verse nos. 47/1, 3, 5, 7, 9 assert that the various *vital winds are revelations of Brahm*, the cosmic force that infuses life into this creation, the supreme cosmic Consciousness.

The *length of the 'Pran'* or the vital wind in the body—references: (i) Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 54 (108 finger-width length); (ii) Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Purva Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 24 (96 finger-width length).

The Pran (breath) is said to be about *108 finger width in length* according to the *Trishikhi Brahman Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 54.

According to the *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 24, the total length of the Pran, called a 'Sutra' or the thread of life, measures a length of *96 finger-widths*.

It is said to be present outside the nose, or circulate around the latter, till a distance of 12 fingers width—refer Atharva Veda tradition's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 28. To quote—"The Pran extends up to a distance of twelve fingers width outside the body. When the creature's 'self' is able to grasp it and pull it in, then this process is called 'Purak'. [This refers to the inhalation of breath to fill the body with the air that is present outside it.] (28).

[Note—We see a halo depicted around the head of divine souls or spiritually elevated persons in their portraits. This halo or aura symbolizes the Pran that has been activated and energized in such people. As has been said in this verse, this energized Pran extends for some distance around their head just like we have an aura around the flame of a lighted candle or the halo around the disc of the sun in the sky. This halo consists of charged particles just like the manner of the charged Pran wind established around the head of spiritual persons.

We have even two forms of electricity—one that moves in the wire, the 'dynamic electric current', and the other that is known as 'static electricity' which consists of static charged particles in the air immediately around certain things which are dynamic. Likewise, we have two forms of Pran—one that moves in and out of the body, the 'dynamic Pran', and the other that is steady around the head of spiritually attained persons, and it is charged with energy that is subtle but visible in the form of the halo or the aura their heads.

In this context, it would be interesting to see what the characters of a spiritually enlightened and self-realised holy man, known as a saint or a Sadhu, are. A true Saint or pious man known as a Sadhu, according to *Adhyatma Ramayan* of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, canto 3, verse no. 37-39, has the following characteristics—

"Those persons who are even-minded and stable, have equanimity and forbearance, are serene, placid, unruffled, unwavering, calm and balanced under adversities as well as favourable circumstances, both during sorrows, sufferings and troubles as well as under happy and joyous situations in this world; those who are without any desires and wants whatsoever; those who do not have any attachment to their worldly assets such as their

wealth and sons, nor harbour any desires pertaining to them; those who have restrained, conquered and suppressed their sense organs and their wayward tendencies or the urge for their gratification; those who are of a serene, calm, peaceful and tranquil temperament and mind; those who are sincerely devoted and dedicated to you; those who are devoid of and free from all desires, greed, avarice, yearnings and ambitions of all kinds (37); those who are even-keeled, have equanimity, remain neutral, unaffected, indifferent and aloof even while going through the throes of destruction (unfavourable circumstances) or construction (favourable circumstances); those who are without encumbrances and attachments of any kind; those who abandon and forsake involvement in all types of worldly deeds and getting involved in various actions, i.e. do not regard himself as the 'doer' of any deed, nor expects any reward or punishment for it; those who are always the followers of Brahm (i.e. pursue the path of righteousness that leads to the supreme, eternal One) (38); those who are endowed with 'Yam' and other virtues (e.g. self-restraint of passions and doing penances and austerities); and those who are contented and satisfied with whatever comes their way—such persons who possess these virtues are truly 'Sadhus' (saintly, pious, holy, divine, pure in mind and heart). Whenever one is fortunate to get communion and a chance to interact with such saints, one develops endearment for and interest in your divine stories (i.e. in spiritualism) (39)".]

The Upanishads describing the various connotations and aspects of the Pran or the vital winds have been cited in Section no. 2 that describe the Panch Prans.

The *Chandogya Upanishad* of the Sam Veda tradition, Canto 5, section 1 describes the importance of Pran in a very interesting manner. Let us read how.

“Verse no. 6 = Once, all the ‘Prans’ (i.e. all the vital organs of perception) of the body began quarrelling among themselves, each arguing that it was more important than the rest of them (6).

[Note—The word Pran technically means the vital wind called breath dwelling in the nose, but the word, when extended in its meaning, covers all the organs of perception, including the eyes, ears and speech as well as the heart and mind which are the crucibles or receptacles for such perceptions, because all of them are equally important and vital for an individual to live a normal life. A person’s life will become burdensome to live if he has no heart (emotions) or no mind (intellect), or lacks any one of the organs of perception such as the ears or eyes or nose or tongue or skin functioning normally. But all these other organs, whether gross or subtle depend upon Pran which is a synonym for life in a creature. Of what use is the eye, the ear etc. for a creature (a man) if he is dead?]

“Verse no. 7 = All the ‘Prans’ collectively went to their guardian or father Prajapati (the creator Brahma) to resolve this dispute between themselves. They said, ‘Oh Lord! Who is the best amongst us?’ Prajapati replied, ‘The element or factor present amidst you, the removal of which renders the body useless and worthless (i.e., makes it become as useless and worthless as a dead body, or even worse), is the best one’ (7).

[Note—These organs wished to know which of the qualities each of them represents is the most important, most significant and most vital quality amidst the ones enumerated therein. The father, Prajapati, gave a vague reply so as not to appear to be siding with any one entity, or causing any schism between them. He wished to remain neutral and not seem to appear to be partisan, because any specific answer from him favouring any one of them was sure to incite further jealousy and ill will.]

“Verse no. 8 = The faculty of speech left the body. It went out for 1 year and returned back to ask the other faculties— ‘How was it possible for you all to survive without me?’ Then all the rest of the organs replied, ‘Just like a dumb person who can happily roam about breathing fresh air with his nose, seeing with his eyes, hearing with his ears, thinking with his mind and having emotions with his heart, even though he is unable to speak—we too lived in a similar manner’. Ashamed and humbled, the faculty of speech re-entered the body (8).

“Verse no. 9 = Next, the eye left the body for 1 year. Upon return, it also enquired— ‘How could you all survive without me?’ All the other organs replied, ‘Just like the blind person who cannot see but can breathe, speak, hear, think and feel and have emotions, we too lived without you’. Ashamed and humbled, the eye re-entered the body (9).

“Verse no. 10 = Next came the turn of the ears. The ear left the body to move out of it for 1 year. It came back and asked its companions— ‘Say, how could you all survive without me?’ They replied in unison, ‘Just like a deaf man can live breathing air, speaking with his voice, seeing with his eyes, thinking by his mind and feeling and having emotions with his heart, we too could survive without you’. Ashamed and humbled, the ear re-entered the body (10).

“Verse no. 11 = Then it was the turn of ‘Mun’, i.e., the mind and the heart complex, to make its exit from the body for 1 year. When it returned, it asked the others — ‘How could you survive without our presence?’ They collectively replied, ‘Just like a child whose mind and heart denoting intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, discrimination, thoughts and emotions are not developed enough nevertheless lives like an ignorant, stupid, mischievous and foolish one, breathing fresh air, speaking by its voice, seeing with its eyes and hearing with its ears, we too survived without you (like that innocent and ignorant child)’. Ashamed and humbled, the ‘Mun’ (i.e., the mind and heart complex) re-entered the body (11).

[Note :- We must note that the physical organs did not completely vanish or actually leave the body. It is simply to mean that their subtle functions stopped on a test basis. It’s ridiculous to imagine a man without a ‘heart’. It wasn’t that the physical organ called the heart or the brain left the body as we understand the word ‘left or exit’ to mean, but it is only a figure of speech to explain the ramification of the concept. Things should be understood in the correct perspective.]

“Verse no. 12 = Finally, the vital breath which sustains life of a creature in his body, called ‘Pran’, made preparations to leave the body. Even as a horse takes out the nail driven in its hoof to tie it down, i.e., slow it down to a trot and prevent it from galloping away, the Pran broke all its ties with the other organs and prepared to leave. Shocked, shaken, stunned, dumbfounded, distressed and feeling strangled and suffocative on the verge of death and extinction, they collectively requested it, ‘Oh Lord! Please remain where you are. You are indeed the best, the most superior and the exalted one amongst us all. Do not go out (because we can’t survive without you)’ (12).

“Verse no. 13 = Showing honour to that vital Pran, the organ of speech said, ‘The honour of being ‘Vashistha’ (the senior most entity) belongs to you. The eyes joined it, saying, ‘The honour of having ‘Pratistha’ (i.e. established glory) belongs to you’ (13).

“Verse no. 14 = The ears said, ‘The honour of possessing the best of ‘Sampat’ belongs to you’. The ‘Mana’ (heart and mind complex) joined the chorus, ‘The honour of being an ‘Aayatan’ (the periphery of existence, beyond which nothing exists) belongs to you (14).

“Verse no. 15 = That is why the various faculties of perception are collectively called ‘Pran’ by the people of the world because all of them are manifestation of the ‘main Pran’. They are not separately called speech, eye, ear, heart and mind (15).

[Note :- Verse nos. 13 and 14 tell us that the honour has been willingly given to the main Pran by these organs of perception. The Pran became the sovereign of all these entities. All these organs are of any use only as long as the main Pran lives in a man's body. A dead body has no use for its eyes, ears, heart or mind.]”

A similar incidence is narrated in Shukla Yajur Veda's *Brihad Aranyak Upanishad*, Canto 6, Brahman 1, verse nos. 7-14.

The importance and significance of Pran has also been explained in *Chandogya Upanishad* of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 7, Section 15. The word ‘Pran’ refers to the vital wind that supports life in this creation, and in its unusual connotation it refers to the breath. This vital wind ‘Pran’ is synonymous with life, and is the vital sign of it. It is also synonymous with Brahm because the latter stands for life.

“Verse no. 1 = Sanat Kumar said to Narad, ‘Pran is superior to Asha (hope). Just like the wheel of a chariot has the central hub around which it rotates, the entire living creation revolves around the essential and elementary life factor called ‘Pran’. The ‘Pran’ moves on its own strength taking forward along with it the whole creation even as the turning of the hub of the wheel turns the entire wheel which in turn takes the chariot forward¹. One Pran (creature) gives its own Pran (life) for another Pran (creature)². Pran is the father, Pran is the mother, Pran is the brother, Pran is the sister, Pran is the teacher and Pran is the Brahmin³ (1).

[Note :- ¹Since Pran itself refers to ‘life’, it does not require any other force to enable it to become alive. In fact, it is Pran that gives life to the otherwise inert and inane gross elements of creation; therefore, there is nothing that can inject life into that entity which itself is full of life and a fount of it. Pran is the factor that makes other things move, which wouldn't have moved or shown any other signs of life if there wasn't life or Pran in them. That is why Pran is synonymous with life.

²This phrase means a man (one Pran) lays down his life or suffers (i.e., gives away his Pran or life) for another man or creature (i.e., for another Pran). In short, it means a person ‘A’ lays down his life (Pran) for another person named ‘B’. The 1st ‘A’ can be a soldier, for example, who lays down his Pran (life) for his Lord or master or the king named ‘B’.

³Pran is most dear to a creature. All the relationships that a creature has in this world are relevant to him only till they have Pran or life in them. No one loves a dead body. This is the significance and importance of Pran for a creature.]

“Verse no. 2 = If a person shows insults to, or speaks ill will of, or uses uncouth words for his father, mother, brother, sister, learned teacher or a Brahmin, then anyone who sees him showing such insult or disrespect to his elders or hears him speak disgracefully to his elders using insolent words for them, scoffs and scorns at him, censures and reprimands him, treats him with contempt and disdain, admonishing him most reproachfully, ‘Woe to you. You are indeed guilty of a crime which is very grave and as horrendous and unpardonable as the killing of your parents, siblings, teachers or the exalted ones in society (a reference to Brahmins)’¹ (2).

[Note :- ¹When a man uses insulting words for his parents, teachers or elders in society, the people accuse him of committing an unpardonable offence. To insult one’s elders by using uncouth and insulting words for them is as despicable and hateful a crime as, and is tantamount to killing them. Since murder is the gravest crime against a living creature, using insolent words for elders is as grave a crime as killing them. It is most deplorable, contemptible and abhorable.]

“Verse no. 3 = But when any of the people mentioned above die and the person has to perform their cremation and funeral rites involving the burning of their dead bodies on a funeral pile, rupturing their skull and inserting boiling oil in it so that it burns down completely, and then finally pushing the remains into a river or collecting the remaining pieces of bones to disperse them in holy rivers at pilgrims sites—no one blames him of showing any indecency, rudeness, insult and dishonour to them, or committing any outrageous act. No one reproaches or censures him for his act. No one holds him guilty of killing his father, mother, brother, sister, teacher or Brahmin (when he burns the body, ruptures the skull, pushes the remains in the river or collects the pieces of bones) (3).

“Verse no. 4 = The same Pran (Atma, soul, spark of life, breath) resides in all the above people. All of them (parents, siblings, teachers and elders) are no one else but the Pran residing in one’s own self. [That is, the Pran which resides in the person is the same as that in his relatives whom he loves. There is no distinction between these two Prans. The bodies of his parents and others are not the dear ones whom he loves. He loves their Pran.]

A person who perceives and experiences this truth everywhere, who thinks in these terms, who has this outlook towards the temporal world and is firmly convinced of it, has firm faith in it—such a person is called ‘Atiwadi’.

If anyone says to him, ‘You are an Atiwadi’, he should accept it as a fact. He should not conceal it or feel shy to admit it.’ (4)

[Note :- The word *Atiwadi* literally means ‘one who speaks crude truth; a person who seems boastful in speaking the raw truth, and he is proud that he speaks the raw and crude truth; an arrogant and extravagant bold person’. Here it implies that people might accuse a person who speaks about the Pran in the way described in this canto as being boastful of his erudition and knowledge when he says that the Atma residing in him and the others—such as his parents, siblings, teachers and Brahmins—is the same. He appears to his detractors to be pretentious, imposter as an enlightened and wise person just to impress others, although he isn’t. His erudition and enlightenment seems to be superficial, false and even misleading, and he appears to be posing as a wise man just to cheat others or impress them. People say that he is trying to show off; he is haughty, arrogant, boastful and deceitful. But if his conviction about this profound truth about the Atma is sincere and honest, then he should not hesitate or demur in accepting it, i.e., that

he is indeed an ‘Atiwadi’ notwithstanding the sarcasm and taunt that is hidden and implied in the comments made about him by his detractors. He has a holistic approach to Atma. His views of creation are not tainted by worldly delusions and they are not self-centric and egoist, though his opponents fail to realise the genuine high stature of his mind and intellect. They fail to see his perspective and deep understanding of the subject.]”

More details will be discussed in Section 2 which deals with the ‘Panch Prans’.

(c) The Fire element or TEJ / TEJA—

The celestial Fire element, known as the Agni, is characterized by the possession of ‘Tej’ (pronounced as ‘Teja’). ‘Fire’ gives light, heat and energy, fire has brilliance and radiance, fire injects vitality and dynamism in the world, and all these virtues are synonymous with ‘Tej’. Hence, the ‘fire element’ and ‘Tej’ are normally used synonymously.

The Tej is a word incorporating in its ambit such entities as lightening and fire as well as such virtues as majesty, radiance, glory and splendour, is subordinate in importance to Akash (space or sky) because the latter has ‘Tej’ as one of its various constituents. For example, a fire needs open space to burn and leap into a flame. The others being sun, moon, stars etc. The ‘Tej’ element present in the sun is also a part of ‘Akash’ because it is in ‘Akash’ that both the sun and its ‘Tej’ (energy and splendour) reside. All of the celestial bodies mentioned here—such as the sun, the moon and the stars—have Tej or ‘light’ in them in varying degrees, and they are like small specks or moderate sized dust particles strewn on the vast beach that constitute the sky or space element of creation. The extension, dimension and domain of the space or sky are millions of times larger than these entities.

The word Tej refers to the virtues of energy and potentials as well as strength, valour, majesty, radiance, splendour and brilliance that a person possesses. Holy persons are said to effuse a divine halo about them selves which represents their spiritual energy that is showing itself as divine effulgence that radiates around them like light around a lighted lamp.

The Vaishwanar Agni or Cosmic Fire element—The legendary ‘fire element’ that has a cosmic presence is called the “Vaishwanar (pronounced as Vaishwaanar) Agni”. has a very prominent place in the scriptures. The Fire God or *Agni* appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/1; 1/12; 4/5; 5/1; 6/7-9; 7/1, 3-6; 12-13; 8/1, 23, 39; 10/1-7; 12/1-122 etc.; in Sam Veda—1-51; 53-55 etc.; in Yajur Veda—1/5; 2/4; 7/24; 18/72 etc.; and in Atharva Veda—6/119; 8/3; 12/3.

The word *Vaishwanar Agni* refers to the eternal fire which burns in the cosmos in a subtle and imperceptible form to keep the flame of life inherently and constantly burning. It represents the ‘consciousness’ factor of the creation; the ‘warmth’ of fire is a sign of life whereas ‘cold’ is a harbinger of and synonym with death. Amongst the five elements created at the time of creation (earth, water, fire, air, space), it is the fire which is the only element which has energy, heat, light, splendour, dazzle and radiance. The water will be nothing else but ice and of no use to the creature without fire as far as its

ability to harbour and sustain life is concerned. Similarly, the earth would freeze cold and covered with a thick sheet of ice were it not for the eternal fire burning inside it, even under the ocean bed covered to the brim with water which acts as an antidote to fire. This very fact shows that the Supreme Lord is active in the fire and prevents it from being doused by water because the Lord needs it to sustain life as much as he needs the water. Further, without heat there will be no seasons, no currents, no movements in the air. There will be no formation of clouds and there will be no rainfall in the absence of heat. In brief, the vital spark of life in this world is represented by the 'fire element', hence, it is called the 'Lord of the Vishwa', or Lord Vaishwanar. This fire element derives its vitality, stamina, energy and potentials from Brahm.

According to Maitrenyu Upanishad, canto 2, verse no.8 of the Sam Veda tradition, this Vaishwanar is the fire present in the living creature giving it the vital energy to digest the food eaten by it.

Since the Fire God was the first born amongst the various Gods, he was called 'Agni', meaning the one who comes first, the one who precedes others. It is the inherent 'fire' element present in all the living creatures that distinguish them from non-living creatures. It is all-pervading and omnipresent, and infuses life to all the creatures. (Refer: Kaushitaki Brahmin, 4/3; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 9, verse no.1). This fire helps in digestion of food (Shatpath Brahman, 148/10/1).

The Fire God is the foremost amongst the Gods worshipped on earth (Shatpath Brahman, 6/1/1/11). He is compared to the Sun in the heavens. He has 7 tongues representing the 7 colours of the rays of the Sun or the colours of light (Rig Veda, 1/146/1; 3/6/2). Since he provides nourishment to the Gods by accepting the offerings made to the sacrificial fire at the time of fire sacrifices, he is deemed to be their sustainer and father (Rig Veda, 1/69/1). Other names of the Fire God called Agni or Agne are the following—Vishwavedus, Kavi, Kavikratu, Jaatvedas, Vaishwaanar, Tanunpaat, Maatrishwa/Maatarishwa and Naraashansha. It is believed that he was born from the mouth of the Virrat Purush (Rig Veda 10/90/13).

According to some texts, the fire element has *three* legendary forms—viz. the 'Agni', which is the terrestrial fire on earth represented by the word Bhu, the 'Jatvedas', which is the fire of the sky, or the celestial fire, represented by the word Bhuvaha, and 'Vaishwanar', which is the fire of the heavens represented by the word Swaha (Brihaddevtakar, 1/67). The term appears in the Rig Veda approx. sixty times and is more often than not synonymous with both life as well as the fire element.

According to others texts, the Holy Fire has five forms elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13. They are the following—(a) 'Garhyapatya' (the fire of the household hearth), (b) 'Dakshinagni' (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) 'Ahavaniya' (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) 'Awasathya' (the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The *Garhyapatya* fire—This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire place in the house. Hence, the

Garhyapatya fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these 4 entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The *Dakshinagni* fire—This is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest form of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

The *Ahawaniya* fire—This is lit to invoke Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The 'electric' is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possess most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

Scriptures ordain that a learned person should worship the fire element by doing five types of sacrifices in his life. These are called the *Panch Maha Yagya* (the five great religious sacrifices). They are the following—(1) Bhut Yagya refers to taking care of other creatures in creation, such as feeding animals and providing for their protection and shelter. (2) Manushya Yagya refers to doing the same thing for fellow human beings as done for animals and other creatures of this creation. (3) Pitri Yagya refers to offering oblations to dead ancestors and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls. (4) Dev Yagya refers to the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which sustain the Gods and are done to honour them. (5) And Brahm Yagya refers to the study of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahm. These five sacrifices have been described in Ashramo-panishad, verse no. 3.

The following are also regarded as the five fires—(i) The Sun, (ii) The Lightning, (iii) The Terrestrial fire, (iv) The Master or Lord of the household, and (v) The Chief Priest.

This sacred fire element has *five forms* as referred to in the following Upanishads—(i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Kathvalli or Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 13-18; Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse nos. 12, 19; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 29-32. (ii) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 4, sections 10 to 13.

The *worship of the Fire* has been described in Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 2, section 24, while Canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24; Atharva Veda's Mundak Upanishad, Canto 1, section 2.

The relationship between the universality of the fire element and the pure conscious Atma has been described very beautifully in Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 9 of the Krishna Yajur Veda.

The *Agni Vidya* pertains to the metaphysical knowledge of the various facets of the eternal fire element which is at the root of creation—because any form of life necessitates the presence of energy and heat and light which are the grand and unique virtues possessed intrinsically only by the fire element. Now let us have a broad glimpse of the different forms in which this fire element has been worshipped down the ages.

The sacred fire has been described to Nachiketa by the God of death, Yam, in *Kathvalli or Katho-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 13-18. It is called Agni Vidya. To quote—

“Verse no. 13 = Oh Yam! You are well acquainted with the Agni Vidya (i.e. the science and knowledge pertaining to spiritual energy which is as potent as the fire element) that entitles and empowers a man to reach the heaven and enjoy its benefits. I am devoted to you and eager to learn about it. So be kind to preach me about that Agni Vidya by which one can attain heaven and enjoy its eternal peace and tranquility. This is the second boon that I wish be granted to me’ (13).

“Verse no. 14 = Yam said to Nachiketa, ‘Oh Nachiketa! I am well versed in the ‘Agni Vidya’ that you wish to know about. It is able to provide an eternal and imperishable life in the heaven to those who know it and are well conversant with it; it is the foundation upon which the entire edifice of heaven and eternity is based. Here carefully about it from me and understand its import fully.

This profound metaphysical knowledge about the ‘Agni Vidya’ entitles and enables a person to reach or access the heavens (which is a metaphoric way of saying that it gives him immortality and beatitude). It is also the foundation and sustainer of this world as well. It is the dynamic force in creation that powers, energises, supports, sustains and protects all forms of life, both in the mortal world on the earth as well as the immortal world in the heaven.

It is very esoteric and mysterious, and you must regard it as secret that is hidden in a deep cave. [That is, it is very difficult to understand it correctly or even have access to the knowledge pertaining to it. It is equally difficult to find someone who would explain it in detail. But impressed by your sincerity and steadfastness of purpose, I shall narrate it to you in detail.] (14).

[Note—*Agni* means fire, and *Vidya* means knowledge. Taken together, this knowledge refers to the inherent strength, energy and power of the pure conscious ‘self’ or Atma that resides in the subtle heart of all living beings. This is the dynamic energy of the ethereal Spirit that helps the creature to rise above the mundane and reach for the ‘sky’ or heavens. This is metaphoric way of saying that if a man takes the shelter of his conscience which is the voice of this inner ‘self’ and obeys its orders, he can become god-like and attain immortality and happiness that is available to those who are sinless and free from all worldly taints. This is the picture at the micro level. From the cosmic perspective it refers to the dynamic forces of Nature in the form of the fire element that

provides the basic energy and vitality for the creation to come into being in the first place and then sustain what has been created.

As any specialised field of science and art requires expert knowledge and skills specific to that field in order to derive any real and tangible benefit from it, the knowledge of Agni Vidya would enable the person who has this knowledge to attain great heights of spiritual achievements that are not available to those who lack it. The term 'fire' is also symbolic of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment because without these virtues the inherent spiritual strength of a man cannot be known by him. It also stands for having great zeal and enthusiasm for reaching great heights of spiritual freedom.]

“Verse no. 15 = After that, Yam explained to him about the ‘Lok Agni’ in detail. This ‘fire’ is the primeval cause for the creation known as the ‘Loka’ coming into being¹.

On the physical plane, Yam explained to him the details of how to build the sacrificial fire pit using bricks where this all-pervading cosmic fire is symbolically established at the micro level of creation². He described in detail the type and number of bricks to be used for the purpose of constructing the fire pit.

Nachiketa heard the teaching in rapt attention and repeated what he had learnt for the satisfaction of the Yam God. [In order to test his attentiveness and intelligence, Yam asked him to repeat what he had learnt, at which Nachiketa repeated verbatim what he was taught.]

Yam was extremely pleased by the boy’s concentration and ability to grasp things taught to him. He said to him—(15).

[Note—¹This ‘fire’ represents the cosmic dynamic creative energy of the supreme transcendental Brahm which the latter employed to unfold this vast and multifarious creation. It is a metaphor for the knowledge, expertise and skill that Brahm inherently possessed that enabled the latter to mould such a stupendous variety of creation from virtually nothing. This is a highly technical field requiring expertise of the highest order. It can be compared to the modern atomic or aerospace sciences which are highly technical fields of knowledge, and not every Tom, Dick and Harry can be an expert in it. That is why this Agni Vidya is not only regarded as the basis of creation but highly esoteric and mysterious as well. It not only provided the basic know-how to get the process of creation started but even provided the very first spark to ignite the cosmic cauldron.

Thus, the Agni Vidya refers to the wisdom and knowledge which one employs to harness and establish control over the stupendous dynamic energy, powers and strength of the eternal ‘fire element’ which is the basis of creation and which is the primary vital spark that not only initiated the process of creation in the beginning but sustained it once the thing came into being. Energy and strength are needed for anything to happen. Such a gigantic creation also needed an atomic explosive spark to provide the initial ignition to get the chain reaction of creation started. Heat and energy are the prerequisites for any activity, whether at the visible gross level or at the invisible subtle level. Nothing in this world can survive even for a moment without heat and energy. This is why ‘fire’ is deemed to be at the base of creation. Once a man is able to control this magnificent cosmic power of creation and harness its astounding energy, nothing can beat him again. He becomes a ‘superpower’ in the realm of creation.

In other words, from the metaphysical perspective, a person who can use the energy of the Pran (vital winds) and Atma (consciousness) present inside his body can achieve great things which defy imagination. The Agni Vidya would therefore refer to the harnessing of the inherent spiritual strength and dynamic energy of the pure

consciousness present in a man and use it to attain liberation and deliverance from this world. It can be used to attain the state of eternal blissfulness that is akin to being in heaven.

²When the performer of the fire sacrifice sees the astounding powers of the raging fire in the sacrificial pit and observes that it burns everything put into it, and that it selflessly passes over these offerings to the Gods for whom they are meant after due purification, the spiritual aspirant learns a great spiritual lesson from what he observes. He learns that one should be as fierce and unrelenting as the fire to destroy every worldly impurity and spiritual obstacles that comes his way, and be as selfless as the fire so that whatever he possesses is passed on for the benefit of others. If this happens, he would acquire as great a power as the fire greatly honoured by all.

³In ancient times it was an established belief and tradition that the way to attain heaven was through the path of the fire sacrifice. The fire sacrifice was in effect a method to harness the dynamic cosmic energy inherent in the all-pervading fire element which would sufficiently empower the person performing the fire sacrifice to achieve his goal. The sacrificial pit and the heat generated from it remind one of the modern day nuclear reactors. Even as the strength and energy and powers of the atom can be harnessed for beneficial or ruinous effects through the nuclear reactor, depending upon the temperament and mental setup of the person who masters the science of atomic energy, the fire sacrifice could be similarly used either for auspicious purposes such as attaining eternal peace and tranquility for the tormented soul, or for attaining worldly glory and conquest. Harnessing of nuclear energy requires expertise, knowledge and skills not easy to master and not accessible to all. Building and operating a nuclear facility also is a daunting and elaborate job. Similarly, the ancient fire sacrifices required special skills and expertise, and it was not simply lighting any odd evening village community bonfire to the merriment of all those who sit around it to gossip about the day's events.

The fire sacrifice was a 'must do' exercise that in ancient times was the only means of attaining heaven and getting riddance of sins. It was ordained that a man must perform a fire sacrifice before his death so that the negative affects of any deed done by him during the past and present lives are nullified and the way to his liberation and deliverance is cleared.

From this perspective of doing a fire sacrifice to attain spiritual eternity and liberation, the 'units' of the special knowledge that Yam described to Nachiketa symbolically pertain to the steps to be followed in the construction of the fire pit—such as the type of bricks used, the number of bricks to be used, the geometrical design of the sacrificial pit, the type of wood to be used in the ceremony, the Mantras to be chanted, and other such finer details which must be diligently and strictly followed if any spiritual benefit is to be derived from the entire exercise. So, the sacrificial fire pit is like an oven in which the fuel of wood is added and the science of Mantras is used to order to generate immense energy that can empower the patron performing the fire sacrifice with stupendous potentials.

By way of explaining the details of the physical construction of the fire pit, Yam was metaphorically explaining to Nachiketa the different forms of 'fire' as a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm's astounding dynamic energy, stupendous potentials, magnificent powers and cosmic strength. The visible symbol of the eternal fire is the sun in the sky, and the energy inherently present in the body of all living beings. It is a well known fact that no life can ever exist without heat and energy of the fire element. In Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition (Canto 4, Sub-cantos 5 and 7) it has been stated that Brahm is characterised by light and illumination (as opposed to darkness) which are the characteristic virtues of the fire element. The entire Canto 3 is dedicated to

the praise of the Sun God as the essence of life, and Sun is the celestial pitcher of fire element which burns eternally inside it.

The 'fire' has immense importance in metaphysics as it is a symbol of life, vitality, energy and the purity and strength inherent in the consciousness known as the Atma of the entire living world. Without 'fire' everything is deemed to be dead and gone.]

“Verse no. 16 = The exalted Yam God was very pleased with Nachiketa when he observed his divine virtues and rare intelligence, his phenomenal memory, steadfastness of purpose, sincerity and integrity. He blessed him thus—‘I am so pleased with you that I hereby grant you an additional boon that henceforth this astounding metaphysical knowledge called ‘Agni Vidya’ will be known after you (i.e. it will have your name attached to it and would be recognised as ‘Nachiketagni’)¹. Now you should accept this symbolic magnificent garland from me as a token of my blessing for you. The magnificent beads of this garland represent all the units of knowledge pertaining to the eternal fire element, which are like individual gems. This knowledge is the basic requirement for achieving success in spiritual progress of an aspirant, and especially useful during fire sacrifices, because without this knowledge no fire sacrifice can be completed successfully (16).

[Note—¹It is standard practice even in our time that when a person discovers something new, the discovery is named after him. Nachiketa was the first human to have acquired this astounding knowledge pertaining to the correct way of performance of the fire sacrifice, the esoteric knowledge regarding the correct way of constructing the fire pit and arranging the rest of the accoutrements, and the correct objective to be aimed at and achieved by this exercise, and so it is apt to name the entire knowledge after him.

Yam God is also known as ‘Dharma Raj’ or the deity who presides over all conducts which are called righteous, noble and auspicious. Therefore, Yam is the custodian of all the virtues of righteousness, nobility and auspiciousness. It is his duty to ensure that the laws of Dharma are strictly enforced, and those who do not adhere to them are punished for their misdemeanors. He is like the conscious keeper of creation. So when he found that Nachiketa was a unique model of auspiciousness, nobility and righteousness as is borne out by the fact that he did not hesitate to even chide his own father for his unrighteous way of making charities, willingly courted death for his convictions, and then asked for his father’s peace and forgiveness without any rancour and ill-will in his heart, Yam was extremely obliged to bless him.

The word ‘Nachiketa’ means one who is untouched by worldly delusions and attachments. Only such a man who is untainted in every manner and detached from all attachments is entitled, eligible and qualified for claiming eternity and knowledge of Brahm that is supreme, transcendental and eternal. Attainment of heaven is a natural spin-off of having attained such an exalted stature that makes one equivalent to Brahm.

In Rig Veda, 10/135, Yam asked Nachiketa which chariot he rode to reach the heaven. The obvious answer is the ‘chariot of dispassion and detachment from everything false and perishable, the sincere desire to pursue what is auspicious and righteous, and being uncompromising as far as one’s convictions and faith in what is true and correct are concerned’. Nachiketa was selfless and righteous to the extreme as he was worried for the spiritual welfare of his father, and his detachment from the material world is obvious from the fact that he did not think twice before leaving the comforts of his house and coming to face the death god willingly. This fire of spiritualism burning in the heart of the young Nachiketa enabled him to go straight to the heavenly abode of Yam and confront him with confidence. Whereas others in his place would have been frozen stiff in fear at the prospect of meeting the God of death, Nachiketa waited for him patiently,

determined to meet him instead of running away from the place. Perhaps this confidence of Nachiketa would have stunned Yam himself so much that he would have felt proud to have such an exalted soul as his disciple, for surely Yam must never have encountered a man earlier so willing to serve 'death' at the altar of righteousness and propriety.]

“Verse no. 17 = A wise aspirant should invoke this divine and eclectic knowledge known as ‘Nachiketa Vidya’ (pertaining to the stupendously powerful fire element of creation) having three subtle dimensions¹.

He should declare his tremendous faith and allegiance to this divine knowledge by affirming it thrice. [When one says anything thrice or repeats his desire to accept it thrice, it shows his firmness in his conviction and determination of his mind. To say anything thrice is used even today to confirm something, to firmly assert that what is being said is true and correct and one has no doubt in his mind regarding its authenticity and truthfulness. The repetition of any word thrice is confirmation of one’s commitment in what he is being said by him.]

He is able to fulfill his obligations to three entities with which he is linked in this world because of the incidence of his taking birth in it, but he remains completely detached and indifferent to them. [These three entities to which he has moral obligations are his two parents, viz. the father and the mother, and his teacher. He physically serves them and remains obedient to them, but not emotionally attached to them. He treats them as mere co-travelers in the journey called life. Nachiketa is a living example of this type of person. He served his father to the best of his ability, but was not emotionally attached to him. He even fulfilled his obligation to him by warning him of the grave error he was committing by donating old cows even at the cost of annoying him and having to leave the comfort of the household.]

Such a wise, self-realised and enlightened man is able to fulfill the obligatory three deeds ordained by the scriptures for all human beings², and finally gets across the cycle of birth and death³.

Such a holistic and comprehensive approach to metaphysical principles and doctrines of spiritualism entitles him to overcome the barrier—in the form of an endless cycle of birth and death—created in his path to ultimate emancipation and salvation.

Having acquainted himself with all the finer nuances of this divine knowledge called the Nachiketa Vidya or Agni Vidya, complete with its three dimensional spiritual philosophy, an exalted, self-realised and enlightened man is able to have a first hand experience of the divine Brahm who is honoured and praised by way of doing fire sacrifices. Brahm is indeed the deity in whose honour the sacred fire is lit and oblations made to it. The reward of this auspicious and highly rewarding spiritual exercise is that the aspirant finds eternal peace and tranquility for himself and his soul⁴ (17).

[Note--¹The term *Trividya* has two parts—viz. ‘Tri’ meaning ‘three dimensional, and ‘Vidya’ meaning ‘specialised knowledge, skills, expertise and erudition’. Hence, the combined word *Trividya* refers to the triad of knowledge pertaining to creation. It has many hues and shades of meaning. Let us examine these various connotations one by one.

(1) It refers to the three paths leading to Brahm, the paths that a spiritual seeker seeking to know Brahm follows. They are—(a) Karma Yoga, (b) Gyan Yoga, and (c) Bhakti Yoga.

(a) Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get ‘involved or attached’ to those

deeds or action in as much as we shouldn't be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one's offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person's subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

(b) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

(c) Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person's ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

(2) The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as follows—(1) the path that goes to the heaven where the Gods live, (2) the path that leads to the world of spirits, and (3) the path which leads to the world of mortal creature on this earth. These have been elaborately described in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; and Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3 of it.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1.

(3) The other interpretation of this phrase is that the three paths are the following—(1) the path of Dharma marked by auspiciousness, virtuousness and righteousness, (2) the path of Adharma marked by inauspiciousness, sins, perversions and guilt, and (3) the path of Gyan or the path dominated by truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment.

(4) These three dimensions are symbolic of the three legs of Brahm representing the three planes of creation in which the dynamic powers of Brahm represented by the fire element exist—viz. the past, the present and the future; the mortal world represented by the earth, the immortal world represented by the heaven, and the afterlife represented by the world of the Spirits or the nether world.

(5) The three primary Vedas known as Rig, Sam and Yajur, and the knowledge contained in them is also known as Tri-Vidya.

(6) The three steps to benefit from these Vedas are first to access them, then to acquire their knowledge intelligently and with due understanding, and then to apply it in practice in one's life for the ultimate spiritual welfare of the soul.

(7) Having knowledge of the truth about the three types of bodies of the creature and establishing coordination between these three bodies so that their efforts can be directed towards one's spiritual objective instead of letting these bodies act like obstacles in one's spiritual path. If not handled properly, these three bodies can act like an uncrossable boarder for the creature's Atma. These three bodies are the following—the gross body consisting of the sense organs of perception and action, the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect, and the causal body consisting of the Atma or soul of the creature.

(8) The three states of existence of pure consciousness—the waking state of consciousness called ‘Jagrat’, the dreaming state called ‘Swapna’, and the deep sleep state of consciousness called ‘Sushupta’.

(9) The three legendary rewards of righteousness and auspiciousness—viz. ‘Artha’ or material well being and prosperity, ‘Dharma’ or possessing noble and righteous qualities, being virtuous and upright, and ‘Kaam’ or being successful in fulfilling all worldly desires.

(10) The three phases of creation—viz. the creation, the development and sustenance, and the annihilation of creation.

(11) The three qualities that determine the basic character of a creature. they are ‘Sata Guna’ or noble qualities, ‘Raja Guna’ or mundane and ordinary worldly qualities, and ‘Tama Guna’ or mean and base qualities.

(11) The three classes of society and the knowledge regarding the laws that each of these categories should follow. These three classes are the Brahmins who are people supposed to be learned and wise, and are generally teachers and priests; the Kshatriyas who are the warrior class and assigned the duty to give protection to the other classes, and the Vaishyas who take care of trading and farming so as to provide the basic necessities of life to the other classes. However, there is a fourth class called Shudra whose main function is to serve these three classes in a general way.

(12) The ability to have knowledge of what happened in the past, what is happening in the present, and what would happen in the future.

(13) According to some, the two parents of a man—viz. the father and the mother—and the teacher form the three points of this Tri-vidya because they mould the entire character of a man. While the parents are responsible for his physical existence as well as his basic character building right from the man’s earliest days, the teacher is responsible for his formal education as well as his moral bent of mind. The three are the ones who shape a man’s character and personality more than the scriptures.

(14) The three aspects of formal religion—doing rituals such as fire sacrifices and observance of sacraments, hearing of scriptures, and doing Tapa (austerity and penance, enduring sufferings) and giving Daan (charity and donation) are also to be properly coordinated for any worthwhile benefit.

(15) The knowledge pertaining to the three holy fires also comes within the purview of the Trividya. These fires are—(a) ‘Garhyapatya’ (the fire of the household hearth), (b) ‘Dakshinagni’ (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) ‘Ahavaniya’ (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice)

Nachiketa’s knowledge is called a three-faceted spiritual knowledge or *Tri-vidya*. The three aspects of this knowledge are to be properly coordinated to harness the latent energy, powers and strength that they encapsulate in them much like the latent qualities of the individual atom which reveal themselves when this single atom combines with other atoms to form things that are so useful to existence, such as for example a ‘water molecule’. Each water molecule consists of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. Taken independently, these atoms have different qualities and attributes which are phenomenally different from water. Without water element, life is just not feasible on this earth, but simply putting hydrogen and oxygen together would not create water.

This is what is meant here—knowledge and its units have to be properly coordinated in order to benefit from them.

²The three duties of a creature as a human have many connotations as follows—(1) To search for the ‘truth’ of life by studying the scriptures, understanding what they imply, and then implementing it in practice the doctrine of the scriptures. (2) To diligently follow the tenets of Dharma as prescribed for the three phases of life, viz. the life as a Brahmcharya when he lives a celibate life and studies the scriptures, the Grihastha when

he enters the householder's life, marries and raises a family, provides for its happiness and welfare, and takes care of the society, and Vaanprastha when he passes on the baton to the next generation and prepares to live a life of renunciation and withdrawal. (3) Offering of religious prayers three times a day—at dawn, at noon and at dusk. This is called observing 'Sandhaya' when prayers are offered to the Sun God or any other deity. The Mantra used is usually the Gayatri Mantra. (4) Other three obligations are the ones which a man has towards his father, his mother and his teacher. (5) Doing Yagya (a fire sacrifice or observance of any other religious vow), making Daan (donation, charity and giving alms), and undergoing severe hardships in the form of Tapa (following rigid religious austerity and observance of penance, suffering hardship as a means of purification of the soul and the washing off of all the impurities clinging to it).

³To ensure that the Atma is able to cross the hurdles created by these three bodies, and find its ultimate liberation and deliverance. The statement that the wise and enlightened man who has mastered this Tri-Vidya is able to cross the cycle of birth and death and find his ultimate liberation and deliverance means that his Atma is able to cross the three barriers in the form of these three types of bodies of the man, viz. the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body, that come in the way of his Atma from finding its liberation and deliverance from this world. These three bodies surround the Atma like the impregnable walls of a fort.

⁴This is because he would have studied the Vedas from metaphysical angle and not simply to acquire fame and wealth by participating in elaborate religious ceremonies which require some expert to chant their hymns. When he studies the Vedas and their Upanishads and extracts the essential truth being described in them, he is filled with immense satisfaction that comes with knowledge acquired for upliftment of one self. Spiritual knowledge is liberating and it fills him with an exhilaration of self-realisation. He exults and realises who he actually is. When this is aided by deeds that are commensurate with the noble and lofty ideals enunciated in the scriptures, the aspirant's spiritual progress gets a boost and he is catapulted to a higher state of existence not available to other men who are engrossed in this world and eclipsed by the dark shadow of ignorance and delusions that are the hallmarks of this mundane existence.

When a wise person realises that it is not 'he' but some other divine power that is responsible for creation, development and destruction of this creation, and that he is simply an inconsequential pebble or a particle of dust in the vastness of the cosmos, he feels humbled and all his sense of false pride is punctured like a balloon. It is then that he attempts to find his true identity when the scriptures tell him that he need not be so dejected at being inconsequential, for he is not an ordinary being but the supreme Brahm personified. But that realisation is not meant to stoke arrogance; it instead kindles renunciation because with knowledge comes awareness of the falsehood of this world and the truthfulness of the pure conscious Atma or soul.]

“Verse no. 18 = An erudite, sagacious and wise man who is well versed with the esoteric knowledge called ‘Trinaachiketa Vidya’ (i.e. the knowledge pertaining to the cosmic dynamic energy of creation having three dimensions and bearing the name of Nachiketa as explained in detail in verse no. 17) performs the fire sacrifice after properly selecting the correct type and number of bricks to construct the fire pit and then correctly lighting the sacred fire, is able to enjoy the happiness and bliss that is available in the heaven even before leaving this body at the time of death. That is, such a man can reap the rewards of eternal peace, bliss and happiness while they are still alive (18).

[Note—In ancient times, the fire sacrifices were regarded as the ultimate religious deed that a man can do to entitle him to enjoy the rewards that come with being auspicious and

righteous. These fire sacrifices were supposed to ensure that the performer goes to heaven and enjoy its eternal happiness and pleasures. But if a man rose above the mere ritualistic aspect of the fire sacrifice and understood its spiritual and philosophical importance, he could enjoy the same benefit here in this life itself. He would become so wise and enlightened that he would realise that the supreme transcendental Brahm that is being worshipped through this fire sacrifice is resident in his own bosom as the pure conscious Atma. Therefore there is no need to search this eternal fount of happiness outwardly somewhere as it is present inside one's own self. He would also realise the futility of pursuing this world and the fact that the gross body is not his 'true self'. The 'true self' is the Atma which is eternally blissful and happy. This realisation helps to infuse him with a sense of internal calmness and bliss of realisation of the truth about himself. He no longer worries about death and afterlife as he realises that the Atma never dies, and that therefore there is no question of having an afterlife.]"

According to the *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12, the five holy fires are the following—Pran, Ahawaniya, Dakshinagni, Garhapatya, and Sarwa-Praaschitya' fires. To quote this Upanishad—"Then the five sacred fires are offered oblations by silently¹ remembering the five Mantras meant for the five types of vital winds, one by one. [This is an important verse because it establishes the link between the five types of Prans, the vital winds, and the five sacred fires.]

So, the first oblation is offered to the first fire represented by the main vital wind called Pran² (breath) by mutely humming the first Mantra (meant for the Pran wind—OM Pranaye Swaha). [Pran is considered as a fire because it is the breath that keeps the body of the creature warm and alive. As soon as one stops to breathe, the body dies.]

The second oblation is offered to the second fire called 'Ahawaniya'³ by mutely humming the second Mantra (meant for the Apan wind—OM Apanaye Swaha).

The third oblation is offered to the third fire called 'Dakshinagni'⁴ by mutely humming the third Mantra (meant for the Vyan wind—OM Vyanaye Swaha).

The fourth oblation is offered to the fourth fire called 'Garhapatya'⁵ by mutely saying the fourth Mantra (meant for the Udaan wind—OM Udanaye Swaha).

The fifth and final oblation is offered to the fifth fire called 'Sarwa-Praaschitya'⁶ by mutely saying the fifth Mantra (meant for the Samaan wind—OM Samanaye Swaha). [The Praaschitya fire is the one that is lit as a witness to one's penance, repentance and expiation.] (12).

[Note—¹The Mantras are said in a silent manner or mutely hummed as the worshipper is honouring these sacred fires present symbolically in his own body and not outside in the fire pit of the formal fire sacrifice. These internal fires are symbolically kept burning by the means of the five vital winds which are present inside the body. The Garbhopanishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, also asserts that the body of the living organism is called 'Deha' or body *because* it harbours the Fire element in it. The body is like the 'fire pit' of a formal fire sacrifice, and the Lord that is worshipped by offering oblations to this fire pit would then obviously be the Atma residing inside this body. This Atma is Brahm personified at the micro level of creation.

The Agni Vidya pertains to the metaphysical knowledge of the various facets of the eternal fire element which is at the root of creation—because any form of life necessitates the unavoidable presence of energy, heat and light which are the grand and unique virtues possessed intrinsically only by the fire element. No life on earth is tenable and even imaginable without the involvement of the quintessential fire element. The divine fires have been described to Nachiketa by the God of death, Yam, in Kathvalli or Katho-

panishad, 1/1/1-20 of Krishna Yajur Veda. They have also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13 of Sam Veda tradition.

The five holy fires mentioned in this Upanishad are the following—(i) ²*Pran* or breath. This is considered as the ‘fire’ from the practical point of view also as it is to be observed that any fire can be ignited and kept burning only if there is an adequate amount of fresh air; otherwise it would be extinguished and life that depends upon air is suffocated to extinction. It is to be remembered that it is the breath that pumps in air in the body, and if a man is not able to breathe then all the other winds would automatically lose their importance and relevance because no life is sustainable and tenable without fresh air which is here referred to as the ‘Pran’, and therefore death would ensue. So, the breath, the Pran wind, is the most important aspect of life, and as such is a metaphor for ‘fire’ inasmuch as it keeps the body alive, energised, charged and ventilated besides keeping it well oxidised and detoxified. (ii) ³*Ahawaniya* is the fire lit to invoke the Gods and invite them to come and accept the offerings during a ritualistic sacrifice. (iii) ⁴*Dakshinagni* is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end. (iv) ⁵*Garhyapatya* is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies. And (v) ⁶*Sarwa-praschitya* Agni—which is the fire standing as a witness to one doing penitence, atonement, expiation and amends for his past errors, misdeeds and sins. This is symbolic way of burning all past sins along with their results, and thereby becoming purified and cleansed.]

The *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse nos. 29-32 of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes the following 5 fires—Kalagni, Samulaagni, Vadaagni, Electric (lightening) and Sun (the cosmic cauldron of fire). To quote--

“Canto 5, verse no. 29 = The sublime form of Brahm transcends all these forms and definitions. It is like the divine elixir of life called ‘Som’ (the sanctified liquid drunk during holy fire sacrifices and offered to Gods as an offering, the one which provides the Gods with immortality, and the one which is stored in the moon as the heavenly Amrit, the ambrosia that is the eternal drink of life and bliss).

This Brahm is supreme and transcendental. It is ubiquitous and quintessential in creation. It is the universal witness of everything. It is steady and unequivocally sublime in its divine form, and is eternally exalted.

The ‘Kalagni’ (one of the forms of Fire, especially the one which is said to be burning in hell and which burns everything at the time of doomsday) is located below in the nether worlds called the Patal (29).

“Canto 5, verse no. 30 = The Fire present (burning) inside the body is called ‘Samulaagni’¹. This creates the Naad. [That is, the roar of this fire burning inside the body is heard in the form of a sound compared to the cosmic sound called Naad. It is like the distant roar of an ocean or the one heard when wild fires rage in the forest. It is caused when the air is heated and a strong breeze is kicked up due to the fire.]

The Fire called ‘Vadvaagni’ (also called ‘Badvaanal’) is present in the bones of the body² (30).

[Note--¹According to Garbho-panishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the body of the living organism is called ‘Deha’ or body because it harbours the Fire element in it. It is called ‘Samul’ because it originates in the Moolkand located in the lower part

of the body in close association of the Mooladhar Chakra and Kundalini. Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 168, 177, Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 10-13, and Canto 5, verse nos. 5-6 in this context. This fire supports life and vitality in the body, and in its absence the body would freeze to death just like the absence of the Vadvaagni would freeze the earth into a lifeless barren stretch of wilderness.

²On the earth, it is the fire present in the bottom of the ocean and all freshwater lakes, keeping them warm and supporting an entire aquatic eco-system. The Vadvaagni is responsible for keeping the bowls of the earth hot so much so that the core of the earth is molten lava. The rocks found inside the earth's crusts have been hardened over millions of years due to pressure and the heat of this Vadvaagni because the initial soft crusts of clay, mud and dust were baked and solidified as rocks. Since this fire is stronger near the center of the earth and gradually cools down as one moves up, the core of earth is molten while the upper most layers are soft earth of varying softness, and the intermediary layers are hard and black in varying degrees giving rise to a wide array of minerals such as coal, iron, gold etc. No wonder then that the hardest element in existence, viz. diamond, is also found underground, much below the upper cooler strata of earth, where heat and pressure had compacted the rock into most dense and hardened textures. The presence of fire underground in the deep belly of the earth is evident when we draw water from borewells in winter; while the atmosphere is freezing cold, this water would be comfortably warm and rejuvenating.]

“Canto 5, verse no. 31 = That Fire which is latently present in the rocks (e.g. coal) and wood (e.g. hard-wood) is the one that is present in the bones. This Fire which is present in the earth is the one which is present also in the bones (31).

[Note—Here, the bones are likened to the rocks and hard-wood that support the earth and prevent its collapse. The implication is obvious because the bones support the gross structure of the body just like rocks and hard-wood found in earth support the softer upper layers and prevent the earth from being squeezed and distorted out of shape under various natural pressures and other factors such as meteor strikes and cosmic winds that continue to shower upon earth unpredictably. The rocks have managed to keep the earth maintain its shape even after 4.5-5 billion years of its existence, and after its core is being constantly made hollow by mineral extraction and all kinds of wanton exploitation done by men for his vested selfish interests without bothering for the consequences on a long-term basis. Had there been no bones, the body of the man would be no different from, say, that of an amoeba or sponge. All the internal organs are held in place because the bones maintain the exterior shape and act like a safe cage for them.]

“Canto 5, verse no. 32 = The powerful Fire in the form of the potent energy of the ‘Electric’ lives in the sky in the form of lightening. This fire is the one that lives and charges the inner self of all living beings¹.

The form that the Fire takes in the sky as the ‘Sun’ (the cosmic cauldron of fire) is the one that lives and charges the navel² (32).

[Note—¹The inner self is the Atma which is the pure consciousness residing in the bosom of all living beings, and without which no man can live. The abode of the Atma has been said to be the subtle heart where there is a subtle Lotus in which this Atma actually resides. The heart is known to beat continuously, and it is a medical fact that this beating of the heart is due to a subtle electrical current passing through its muscles. When the heart becomes weak, doctors implant heart pacers or other forms of mechanical devices running on batteries that supply the necessary electric stimuli to the muscles of the heart. The presence of electric current in the heart enables its beating to be monitored by the

ECG machines. Similarly, the functioning of the brain also runs on subtle supply of electric currents, and the flow of impulses in the wide network of nerves is also like the flow of electric in an electronic gadget having circuits and wires.

In brief, the ‘consciousness’ present inside the body is like the ‘electric’ present in the sky as the lightening. The presence of ‘fire’ in its most potent form in lightening is very evident when a lightening strike during sever storms can reduce to ashes anything inspite of the fact that it is heavily drenched and soaked in water and should normally escape being burnt by ordinary fires on earth.

²That is why the navel is said to be the symbolic subtle abode of the Sun God in the body in the form of the Nabhi Chakra or the Manipur Chakra, the whirling energy center located in the region of the navel. It is to be noted here that all the Naadis also have their center of origin in the region of the navel, in the Nabhi Kand—refer Yogchudamni Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse nos. 13-17. These Naadis would then resemble the rays of the sun which have their origin in the latter and radiate out to all parts of the world. The sun as a metaphor of life and Brahm is depicted in the form of the solar system where all the planets revolve around the central hub called the sun, and their existence and place in the solar system is determined by the continued presence of the sun. This is the picture at the macro level, while the navel representing the sun and the cluster of Naadis supporting life in the body of an individual symbolising the sun’s rays would be the picture at the micro level. Just like the rays of the sun not only illuminate the world but also infuses life, energy and warmth in it, the Naadis carry consciousness to all corners of the body and makes the latter alive and active.]

“Canto 5, verse no. 33 = The sun appears to rain down the ‘fire of hell’ causing death and destruction (because of its scorching heat that reduces everything to cinders during hot summers and even causes wild forest fires). On the contrary, the moon rains down the soothing elixir of life in the form of its moonlight. This moon symbolically lives in the base (pit) of the throat and faces downwards to pour the nectar of life to soothe the creature. [When a man is very thirsty, he gulps down plain mucous to calm down his parched throat a bit. The Moon is the patron God of passions and love, and its manifestation is the semen which is cool and mucous-like. Sentiments and emotions are also controlled by the Moon God, and that is why when one becomes emotional and sentimental, mucous seems to well-up and chock the throat.] (33).”

According to the *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 19, there are *five fires* in the body. They are—(i) Suryaagni also known as Darshanaagni, (ii) Ahawaniya Agni, (iii) Sharir Agni, (iv) Dakshinaagni, and (v) Koshtagni or Kosta Agni which is akin to the Garhyapatya Agni. Now let us examine what this Upanishad has to say on the subject—

“Verse no. 19 = (The *first* symbolic fire in the spiritual aspirant’s body is this--)
Out of these four divine Fires, one is called ‘Suryagni’ (or Surya Agni) which literally means the fire resembling the fierce fire burning inside the cauldron of the Sun, and which is treated as being equivalent to and synonymous with the Sun. It is astoundingly splendid, blindingly dazzling, very bright and most radiant like the Sun; it is as potential, as powerful, as bright, as splendid and as radiant as the Sun. It has thousands of scintillating and simmering rays radiating out from it in every direction to cover the entire area of the sky¹.

This subtle macrocosmic invisible form of the Fire symbolically resides in the head of the body of the spiritual aspirant (in the eye and the Agya Chakra), and is also called the 'Darshanaagni'².

(The *second* form of the fire element is mentioned now--) The subtle macrocosmic invisible form of the Fire lives in the mouth of the individual in the form of the 'Ahawaniya Agni'³.

(The *third* symbolic fire in the spiritual aspirant's body is this--) The fire that is inherent to the gross body of a living being, the fire that keeps the body uniformly warm and pervades throughout it is called the 'Sharir Agni'. It consumes the body as the latter ages, and is itself weakened as the body progresses in age. It devours the gross body just like the sacrificial fire devours the offerings put into it⁴.

(The *fourth* form of the fire is the following--) The fire that subtly lives in the heart of all mortal living beings is called the 'Dakshinaagni' or the sacred fire that is lit to witness the charities and donations made during formal fire sacrifices. It is compared to half disc of a moon which goes on declining as time progresses⁵.

(The *fifth* symbolic fire in the spiritual aspirant's body is this--) The fifth form of the sacred fire in the body is called the 'Koshtagni' or Kosta Agni. This refers to the fire burning in the intestines that create hunger and thirst, and help to properly digest whatever is eaten, licked, sucked or drunk. This fire is called 'Garhyapatya Agni' and it lives in the navel⁶ (19).

[Note—¹According to the Upanishads, the Sun has many connotations—it is a visible manifestation of Brahm, complete with its stupendity and astounding magnificence; it is the cosmic eye of Brahm that lights up the world for the latter in his manifestation as the Viraat Purush, the cosmic gross body of Brahm; it is a visible embodiment and a personification of the supreme Brahm's stupendous glory and divine magnificence. No life is possible on earth, which is deemed to be the base and center of all visible life in this creation, without the presence of the Sun; the Sun regulates life in this world by controlling the seasons, the day and the night, and by providing the world with light, heat and energy which are essential ingredients for even the primary forms of life to survive. The Sun is the cosmic cauldron in which the Viraat Purush had performed the first fire sacrifice in order to initiate the process of creation, and therefore it is the cosmic 'fire pit' where the eternal sacred fire is burning and to which the worshipper offers oblations during the fire sacrifice done on earth. The Sun is a personification Fire God as well, and this is an obvious fact given the Sun's vivid form and nature as an eternal ball of cosmic fire.

²The term 'Darshanaagni' assumes an important meaning here. The Sun God took up his abode in a man's eye at the time of creation according to the Genesis of Creation as described in Aiteriyo Upanishad of Rig Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 4. Sight has two connotations—one is the physical seeing of the material objects of the gross world that is the function of the gross organ of the eye, and the other is the ability to see deep into the reality and peep behind the exterior to see the reality that is hidden behind the visual apparent. The former is referred to as seeing from an ordinary man's point of view, while the latter is the actual way of seeing things as done by a wise and enlightened man. So, while the Sun lights up the physical gross world for an ordinary creature to see it, it also provides him the symbolic light of wisdom and insight into the actual truth and reality that is not seen by the external eye of the body. This ability to see the hidden truth is done by the so-called 'third eye of wisdom' also symbolised by the Sun and the light that it provides.

Darshanaagni literally means the fire that enables the creature to see this world and which is itself seen in a subtle form everywhere, or which makes something visible because of its inherent shine—which in this case would be the component of conscious life present in the entire living world. It also means the sublime philosophy that enables one to have this holistic and grand view of the Atma and the world around him.

Now, 'fire' is an element that has light, heat, warmth and energy as its intrinsic virtue. Light is a metaphor for knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment; heat, warmth and energy are closely related with life with all its vibrancy and vitality. So, the eclectic virtues the fire element that metaphorically keeps the mind and intellect alive and active, that keeps the Atma active, energized and empowered so as to think wisely, intelligently, analytically, discriminatingly and rationally, are symbolised by the fire element in its manifestation as the Darshanaagni, or the ability of the creature to see the world in its true form.

Since erudition, sagacity, wisdom and enlightenment are associated with this so-called third eye of wisdom located in the forehead, an enlightened, wise and Brahm-realised man is deemed to have developed a holistic non-dual view of creation and has realised the eclectic truth of the doctrine that his true self is the Atma which is self-illuminated, which is nothing but pure consciousness, and which is a personification of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, the Supreme Being who pervades and permeates uniformly in the entire created world. It follows that such a wise person sees his own Atma in all the other units of creation without exception. He sees no distinction between his own self and the other person standing in front of him. This is the classical non-dual or Advaita philosophy of Vedanta.

This self-illuminated consciousness known as the Atma is evident everywhere in this life—and this is possible due to its inherent light that effuses out from it because of the eternal fire element present in a subtle form in the Atma. This fire resident in the Atma is called the 'Darshanaagni' or Darshan Agni because on the one hand its inherent light, energy and life-infusing abilities enables the Atma to live and interact with the world, and second it provides illumination to the external world as well as sufficient wisdom to the individual man so as to enable his Atma to see, interact and understand about this world. In fact, the inherent illumination and wisdom that is very characteristic of the self-illuminated Atma is known as the Darshanaagni present inside the latter because the term 'Agni' or 'fire' is associated with light, illumination, energy, dynamism and vibrancy related with all forms of life which are the hallmarks of the Atma. [It is the 'fire' that is inherently present in the Atma that enables it to live and shine in this world. The grand characteristic of the Atma as being 'self-illuminated' is also due to the presence of this fire element in it. The gross body of the creature is a lifeless entity, and the fact that this body shows signs of life is due to the presence of this Atma inside it. Much like the case of the moon showing light because it is able to reflect the light of the sun falling on its surface, the body of the creature shows life and activity as well as intelligent behaviour because of the presence of this eternal source of light and wisdom inside it as the Atma. The physical eyes of the body cannot see anything if it was not for the Atma which provides the quintessential spark of consciousness to the body as proved by the fact that the eye of a dead body does not see anything. Even the mind and the intellect see anything and make sense of it only as long as the Atma wishes them to do so as is evident from the fact that the same thing is interpreted in different ways by different people. This is because their Atma sees them differently depending upon the baggage of Vasanas and Vrittis (inherent passions and inclinations) that the Atma is burdened with due to its past involvement with this material world, as well as the level of erudition and wisdom that the Atma had developed over time. It is the 'fire element' present in the entity known as the Atma that provides the latter the required impetus and energy vital spark of life to

remain conscious and alive. Like the body of the Sun God in the form of the visible disc of the celestial sun that shines dazzlingly because of the eternal fire burning inside it, the Atma of the creature also shines and gives light to the world because of the inherent presence of the fire element in its bosom. Even as it is impossible to imagine the sun without the fire present in it, it is equally incongruous to ever think of the Atma, the pure consciousness present inside the body of the individual, without the fire element that is inseparably associated with it. Again, just like the fire of the sun lights up the world for the Viraat Purush to see at the macro level of creation, it lights up the world for the Atma of the individual creature, which is the real identity of the latter, at the micro level of creation.

Anything is seen in this world because it is lighted; no one can see anything and nothing is visible in the absence of light. The Sun is the cosmic candle that provides the world with sufficient light so that it is made visible to the Atma, the living entity present inside the individual's body that actually sees anything.

It has been said elsewhere in the context of the genesis of creation that at the time of the world coming into being, the Sun God was created from the eyes of the Viraat Purush (ref. Aitareyo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4) and subsequently took up residence in the eyes of the man's body (ref. Aitareyo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 4). This is a clear reflection of what is being said here. This is also depicted in the presence of the divine all-penetrating and all-seeing 'third eye of wisdom' located in the center of the forehead in the Agya Chakra.

This fire symbolises the astounding powers of the mind and intellect that lights up the entire world for the creature. This fire enables the man to see, visualise, imagine, research, ponder, contemplate, analyse, deduce and determine; it helps him to have foresight and hindsight; it makes him a visionary and a man who can predict something or some event based critical analysis; a person who can forecast based on his hunch and intuition. Such divine and mystical abilities come because of the presence of the Surya Agni in the head. As to the question why some can do this and some can't, the answer lies in the covering around this symbolic Sun just like the cloud in the sky covering the sun makes it shine brightly at one place and remain invisible at other place.

The word 'Darshan' means philosophy, view, idea, thinking and belief; it also refers to the art of seeing things not visible apparent, the ability to deeply contemplate and ponder. So, this fire is called Darshan Agni because it empowers the man to have these unique and divine abilities.

³The Ahawaniya fire is the fire that helps him to use his voice to invoke the Gods as well as welcome people. This is the fire that helps him to invite knowledge when he eagerly seeks the company of wise and enlightened men. In the context of the internal form of the fire sacrifice which is the subject matter of this Upanishad, it is the Fire God present inside the food eaten, water drunk and air breathed (verse nos. 6, 9-10, 12) who is being invited by the worshipper to take his exalted seat in his mouth. When the fire sacrifice is done, the Gods are invited using this Ahawaniya fire. The presence of this fire in the mouth distinguishes living creatures from those who are not alive. And this is the fire which enables one to speak and eat—because these are some of the functions of the Ahawaniya fire.

This is evident from the fact that during fire sacrifices the Mantras and hymns used to invoke the different deities are chanted or recited aloud, and not hummed silently. To speak, voice is needed, and for it sufficient energy and strength of the vocal cords are also necessary. Food is eaten by the mouth, and it is this food that provides energy and stamina to first learn and then chant the hymns.

The Ahawaniya fire is lit during the fire sacrifices to respectfully invoke Gods, and invite them to come and participate in the sacrifice and accept offerings made to them.

The word 'Aavaahan' in Sanskrit means to invite, invoke, to pray respectfully with the intention of welcoming. Since one uses one's mouth for these purposes, the fire in the form of the strength, energy and vigour of the spoken word and the power of speech residing in the mouth is called Ahawaniya fire.

In ordinary life also, we welcome guests with welcoming words, i.e. we 'invite them' or make an 'Aavaahan', which are spoken by the mouth. It is like invocation of Gods during ceremonies. Similarly, to praise someone and laud his efforts we need to speak by the mouth. Further, it is the speech and the spoken word and the tenor in which these words are said that can rouse emotions and stoke passions, and these are some of the many instances which can be cited to establish that the Ahawaniya fire lives in the mouth. It has been said elsewhere also in the context of the genesis of creation that at the time of the world coming into being, the Fire God was created from the mouth of the Viraat Purush (ref. Aitareyo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4) and subsequently took up residence in the mouth of the man's body (ref. Aitareyo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 4).

⁴The Sharir Agni literally means the fire that resides in the body like the inherent fire element present inside the firewood in a latent form. It is equally distributed in all the parts and organs of the body, but remains imperceptible and latent.

Even as the fire latently present in the firewood gradually burns the wood from the inside though it is not lighted externally, and this is the reason why the firewood becomes dry, thick and hard as all its moisture content and soft pith are baked dry by the heat of its hidden fire. Likewise, the body becomes drier, thinner and weaker, the glaze of the outer surface of the skin gets progressively reduced and the body develops wrinkles and folds, and it presents a general picture associated with old age. That is why as a man becomes old, the heat, energy, stamina, vigour and strength of his physical body declines. It should be noted that this slowing down or aging does not affect the other fires as narrated above. It is a normal thing to observe that older the man is the wiser and more prudent he becomes, he develops greater insight and intelligence, he is said to be more mature in mind and thought, he is deemed to be more experienced—indicating that his Darshan Agni is kicking and alive. Similarly, he speaks wiser words which are even respected by Gods, his invitations are seldom rejected, and he is usually invited to speak on special occasions as compared to young adults—implying that his Ahawaniya Agni is full of vibe and energy.

The instance of the firewood would help to illustrate how this fire imperceptibly burning inside the body consumes it. As the firewood gets older, it shrinks in size, loses its greenery, and becomes drier, harder and more solid. This is indicative of the fact that it is being burnt from the inside.

There is another interpretation of this stanza. Even as the fire latently present inside the firewood remains dormant till it is ignited, but once done it would reduce the wood to ash as compared to ordinary wood which might escape total annihilation if lighted because the fire would only burn its outer surface and the wood begins to emit smoke as it does not have an internal fire to support its burning, the body of a person who does Yoga and by which his internal fire has been ignited gradually becomes thinner as all his superfluous flesh is melted away and all the gross parts of the body get charred and reduced to ashes in a gradual manner so much so that the ignited internal fire would ultimately reduce his body to ashes, an aphorism for the body disintegrating into its five primary constituent elements such as the earth, water, fire, air and sky, so that his Atma, or his pure conscious 'self', and his Pran, or his vital forces of life, would easily escape from this disintegrated body without his making any effort to free himself from the fetters of this gross body. This would be his 'Kaivalya Mukti', the only kind of one-way liberation that would deliver his 'self' from the shackles that tie his Atma and Pran to this body, and consequentially he would also be freed from this mundane life and deluding

world of material sense objects in which he was forced to live because it is the body that links the Atma to this world. On the other hand, ordinary wood begins to emit smoke soon after it is lighted and the fire would die out soon because this wood lacks the internal fire to support the external fire, leaving half-burnt and blackened piece of log that has lost its greenery and charms. Likewise, ordinary people become diseased and their bodies begin to show signs of decay and weakness, losing its sheen and charm as they progress in age. Such people have to suffer in old age due to the decrepit condition of the body which only helps to inflict torments upon the Atma instead of providing it with succour and solace.

In the context of the present Upanishad wherein emphasis is being laid on Pran Agnihotra, i.e. offering of the vital winds as symbolic offering to the sacred fire burning inside the body to pay obeisance to the Supreme Being residing inside the body as the Atma, this Sharir Agni and its ability to reduce the gross body to ashes assumes a great significance. Those who observe self restraint over the organs of the body, those wise ones who do Pran Agnihotra, i.e. those who offer their own life and their self as the ultimate sacrifice to the Lord in a holistic manner, those who are enlightened enough to understand the spiritual and metaphysical nuances of the eclectic philosophy of 'Pran Agnihotra' as espoused and enunciated in this Upanishad—their body is cleansed of all the world-related impurities because they are destroyed by burning in the severe of penance and austerity that the body is subjected to, its artificiality is burnt and reduced to ashes just like the case of the firewood when ignited. Nothing is left behind except the ashes; no vestiges of the earlier life are left behind to become a burden for the soul. This ensures that the Atma is permanently liberated from the prison of the body and the world in which this body forces the Atma to live, and since the body-like prison has been burnt down and reduced to ashes it symbolises permanent freedom because it is a metaphoric way of burning the bridge as one flees from the enemy so that he can never be caught!

⁵This Dakshinaagni fire is lit at the end of the fire sacrifice to bear witness to the charity made during the conclusion of the fire sacrifice. As old age catches up with the wise man, he begins to do auspicious deeds and gives charities; he involves himself in noble activities. Since all sorts of desires, whether noble or ignoble, whether auspicious or inauspicious have their seat in the person's heart, the Dakshinaagni is said to have its symbolic abode in his heart. It is the virtue of a compassionate and merciful heart to be benevolent, helpful and be graceful that inspires the Fire God in his manifestation as the Dakshinaagni to take up his symbolic abode in the noble man's heart. That is why cruel persons are called 'heartless'—not because they do not have a physical heart but because they lack these divine glorious virtues. It also implies that such noble acts are worth only when done with the involvement of the heart, and not to save government taxes!

Such auspicious deeds are usually done on special auspicious days decided by the lunar calendar, hence the reference to the moon's half disc. The half disc also symbolises the declining stage of the body when the man realises that it is high time for him to involve himself in nobler aspects of life, and the fact that life is fast ebbing away in his body and he must make the most out of it before it is finally removed from view as a living entity.

⁶The fifth form of the fire is the one that digests food and drink and thereby extracts nourishment from them for the use of the body. It is called Garhyapatya Agni because it resembles the householder's fire lit in the oven and hearth that he uses to cook food and keep himself warm. Since the navel is the center of the abdomen where the main organ of digestion, the intestine, is located, it is symbolically called the site of this fire. Besides this point, another fact is to be noted—the household hearth is usually located in the central part of the house so that the entire house can be kept warm during severe colds.

Another similarity is in the fact that the process of raising a family through the sexual method is employed by the householder and the organs related with this procedure are also located in the lower part of the abdomen around the region of the navel. So the resemblance of the fire present in the lower part of the body and the Garhyapatya fire is very obvious.]”

The 5 sacred fires and their Mantras—According to *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 12, are the following—(i) *Pran* or breath (as it keeps the body of the creature warm and alive). This is considered as the ‘fire’ from the practical point of view also as it is to be observed that any fire can be ignited and kept burning only if there is an adequate amount of air; otherwise it would be extinguished and, at the cosmic level, suffocated to extinction. It is to be remembered that it is the breath that pumps in air in the body, and if a man is not able to breathe then all other winds would automatically lose their importance and relevance because death would ensue. So, the breath, the *Pran* wind, is the most important aspect of life and as such is a metaphor for ‘fire’ inasmuch as it keeps the body alive, energised, charged and ventilated besides keeping it well oxidised and detoxified. (ii) *Ahawaniya* is the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice. (iii) *Dakshinagni* is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end. (iv) *Garhyapatya*’ is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies. And (v) *Sarwa-praschitya* Agni which is the fire standing as a witness to one doing penitence, atonement, expiation and amends for his past errors, misdeeds and sins.

According to this Upanishad, verse no. 12, these five fires are said to be symbolically present inside the body of the worshipper and oblations are offered to them by means of Mantras meant for the five vital winds, viz. *Pran*, *Apaan*, *Vyan*, *Udan* and *Samaan*. To quote—

“Verse no. 12 = Then the five sacred fires are offered oblations by silently¹ remembering the five Mantras meant for the five types of vital winds, one by one. [This is an important verse because it establishes the link between the five types of Prans, the vital winds, and the five sacred fires.]

So, the first oblation is offered to the first fire represented by the main vital wind called *Pran* (breath) by mutely humming the first Mantra (meant for the *Pran* wind—OM *Pranaye Swaha*).

The second oblation is offered to the second fire called ‘*Ahawaniya*’ by mutely humming the second Mantra (meant for the *Apaan* wind—OM *Apanaye Swaha*).

The third oblation is offered to the third fire called ‘*Dakshinagni*’ by mutely humming the third Mantra (meant for the *Vyan* wind—OM *Vyanaye Swaha*).

The fourth oblation is offered to the fourth fire called ‘*Garhapatya*’ by mutely saying the fourth Mantra (meant for the *Udaan* wind—OM *Udanaye Swaha*).

The fifth and final oblation is offered to the fifth fire called ‘*Sarwa-Praschitya*’ by mutely saying the fifth Mantra (meant for the *Samaan* wind—OM *Samanaye Swaha*) (12).

[Note—¹The Mantras are said in a silent manner or mutely hummed as the worshipper is honouring these sacred fires present symbolically in his own body and not outside in the

fire pit of the formal fire sacrifice. These internal fires are symbolically kept burning by the means of the five vital winds which are present inside the body. The Garbhopanishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, also asserts that the body of the living organism is called 'Deha' or body *because* it harbours the Fire element in it. The body is like the 'fire pit' of a formal fire sacrifice, and the Lord that is worshipped by offering oblations to this fire pit would then obviously be the Atma residing inside this body. This Atma is Brahm personified at the micro level of creation.

The Agni Vidya pertains to the metaphysical knowledge of the various facets of the eternal fire element which is at the root of creation—because any form of life necessitates the unavoidable presence of energy, heat and light which are the grand and unique virtues possessed intrinsically only by the fire element. No life on earth is tenable and even imaginable without the involvement of the quintessential fire element. The divine fires have been described to Nachiketa by the God of death, Yam, in Kathvalli or Kathopanishad, 1/1/1-20 of Krishna Yajur Veda. They have also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13 of Sam Veda tradition.]

The *Chandogya Upanishad* of Sam Veda tradition, Canto 7, Section 11 describes the importance and significance of 'Tej'—i.e. the Fire element along with its ability to provide this creation with energy, vitality and heat. The word 'Tej' has many other connotations, for instance it also means glory, prowess and majesty; radiance and splendour; brilliance and dazzle, the divine halo, the radiant glow that effuses from the face of a holy soul, a prophet and a divine man—all such virtues or qualities are being discussed here.

“Verse no. 1 = Sanat Kumar said to Narad, ‘Tej (in all its different connotations as mentioned above) is superior to water. When the wind is not blowing and Tej (heat) heats up the sky from all directions, people say ‘it is very hot, the temperature is very high and it appears that it would rain’. It is the heat that is produced first, and it is then followed by rain¹. Tej (heat) rises up (because it heats the air, and hot air is lighter than cold air), and in association with lightening, it creates thunder. It is this Tej (energy in the form of electric) that produces lightening and thunder clap. People say that it portends rains. [That is, when there is lightening and thunder, people surmise and deduce that there would be rainfall.]¹

Since Tej is self created and it creates rain in its wake (and not vice verse), so oh Narad, you should worship, adore, admire, honour, praise and revere Tej more than water² (1).

[Note :- (i) ¹As any school going student of science knows, the heat of the sun, which is the source of energy, heats up the atmospheric air as well as the water in the ocean. The water evaporates due to heat, and it rises up with the hot air going up in the atmosphere. The moisture laden air is sucked inland and goes on to reach cooler climes as it traverses across the land and goes to the higher plains and mountains to cool down and precipitate as clouds and ultimately rain.

(ii) ²Sanat Kumar advises Narad that more than the food and water, it is the Tej, the underlying energy and the fire element, that is worthy of adoration and honour, worship and reverence, because without Tej, the very basis of creation, which is the water element as discussed in the previous section no. 10, would not fall down upon earth as rainfall. This Tej, as explained earlier in canto 6, is responsible for actually helping the food to get digested and made profitable for the creature. In fact, food is also a product of water, and when extended by logic, it is a product of energy. It is this Tej or energy which the food

and water transmit from the elements of Nature to the individual creature. The Tej represents the vital energy present in any living creature; it is the Tej that shines in the Sun and enables it to light up the world; it is the Tej that lends electric with its wonderful and stupendous powers. It is Tej that distinguishes an ascetic from an ordinary man.]

“Verse no. 2 = Any person who worships and honours, admires and reveres ‘Tej’ as a manifestation of Brahm, or regards Tej as having the stupendous glories and powers of Brahm, is blessed with radiance, splendour, brilliance, glory and majesty that Brahm possesses. He attains such Lokas (worlds) that are illuminated, splendourous, radiant, glorious and bright without having a hint of darkness in them. If he so wishes, he can reach all those realms where Tej has its reach. [That is, such a person is able to live gloriously, famously and radiantly in this world and is known for his erudition and wisdom. Darkness is symbolic of ignorance. So such a person lives in a place which is the opposite of darkness i.e. he is wise and erudite instead of being ignorant and stupid.] (2).”

The *relationship between the universality of the fire element and the pure conscious Atma* has been described very beautifully in *Kathopanishad*, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 9 of the Krishna Yajur Veda. To quote—“Even as the same fire element which is universally present in the entire creation (as its energy, heat, light, vigour and vitality factor) assumes as many diverse forms as the need arises¹, the pure conscious self called the Atma of all the creatures, which is fundamentally immutable, indivisible, constant, uniform, non-dual and one single whole, has similarly assumed as many forms as there are numbers and types of creatures². This Atma is inside the individual creature as well as outside of it in the form of the Atma of the other creature at the micro level and of the entire creation at the macro level (9).

[Note—¹The *fire element* is the cosmic principal manifestation of the dynamic powers of Brahm that provide this creation with its energy, vitality, heat, illumination etc. The main operating virtue is ‘energy’ and it is well known that energy can not be destroyed but it only changes its form and shape as the need arises. For example, when something needs to be burnt and destroyed, it becomes ‘fire’; when illumination is needed it transforms into ‘light’ energy; when something is to be warmed, it converts its self into ‘heat’ energy etc. This fire element is latently present in a very subtle and secret form even in the water element which outwardly shows properties quite the opposite of the fire element. This becomes evident when we consider how large underground hot water springs are found on earth, how aquatic life survives below frozen lakes in the arctic regions, and the fact that hot water can scald a man with the same ferocity as direct contact with fire.

²The body is like the mould in which the pure molten gold is put to make a piece of jewelry. The *Atma* is like the uncorrupt pure metal gold, while the body is like the mould in which this Atma is ‘cast’. When the Atma has to assume a new body as described in verse no. 7 above, it does not alter the basic nature and fundamental truth of the Atma as the truthful and pure consciousness. The only thing that changes is the outwardly appearance and characteristics of the Atma in this new role. It is like the case of a theatre artist changing attires to suit different roles.

Even as a wise jeweler sees the value of the ornament in its ‘gold’ content, a wise man sees the ‘Atma’ as the only worthy entity in the entire setup.]”

The Location of the Fire element—The *Shandilya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 4 describes the location of the fire element in the body as follows—

“The location of the fire element in the body of humans is like a triangle which is glowing and radiant as a piece of hot, molten gold.

In four-footed creatures (animals) it is square in shape, while in birds it is circular (4).”

The *relationship between the fire element and the letters of the divine sound of OM*, which is universally regarded as a sound symbol of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness from which the creation has come into being has been described in the *Brahm Vidya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 69-69 ½. It says that the fire element is inherently present in the three letters of the divine Mantra OM and three locations in the body of the spiritual aspirant. To quote—“The fire element has three subtle forms and three symbolic locations in the body. Thus, the fire element in the first letter ‘A’ (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the tip of the nose and in both the eyes. The fire element in the second letter ‘U’ (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the heart. And finally, the fire element in the third letter ‘M’ (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the middle of the two eyebrows.”

(d) The Water element or APAHA (pronounced as “Aapaha”)—

Aapo or Apaha refers to the water as flowing in a river, as clouds and as any fluid. It has been deified in the Rig Veda, 1/23/16-22. He is the patron God of ‘water on the move’ or flowing water, such as rivers, rain, clouds etc. There are four Sukts devoted to him in Rig Veda—7/47; 7/49; 10/9; and 10/14. ‘Aapo’ is synonymous with Pran or life giving vitality; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life (Shathpath Brahman, 3/8/2/4).

Apaha, the water element personified as a God, appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/23/16-22; 4/58; 7/47, 49; 10/9; Yajur Veda—2/34; 4/12; Atharva Veda—1/4-6; 18/3/56.

Parjanya—This is the water element in the form of life-sustaining rain which falls down upon the earth from the sky in a symbolic way to seed life and then support it on earth. It appears in the Rig Veda, 1/164/51. This God is responsible for rains and life on the earth; he is regarded as one of the forms of the Wind God (Atharva Veda, 4/15/1).

Varun is the Water God—Varun is also known as the Water God as he is the patron deity who rules over the water element as well as its many manifestations such as the cloud, river and ocean (Gopath Brahman, 1/1/7). He is regarded as the king amongst the Gods (Taiteriyā Sanhita, 3/1/2/7). He is regarded as the patron God of the night (Atharva Veda, 9/3/18). The Duloka (the heavens) and the Prithivi (earth) are under his control and command (Rig Veda, 6/70/1). He determines the path taken by the Sun God during his journey across the sky (Kapisthal Kath Sanhita, 3/4). Varun God is so-called because he surrounds or engulfs or encompasses the whole world and everything where he is present as is the case of the dark rain-bearing clouds that covers the sky (Nirukta, 10/3), and as the dark veil of night (Atharva Veda, Saayan Bhasya, 1/3/3). He is usually depicted in the company of the Mitra God, and as such the duo is called as ‘Mitra-Varun’, with Mitra

being regarded as the senior amongst the two. While Mitra is the patron deity of the day, Varun is the patron deity of the night. He is the lord of all the Bhuvans or abodes, and as such is regarded as the king of creation (Rig Veda, 5/85/3). He has thousands of eyes, and his knowledge and powers are unlimited. He is regarded as the keeper of moral law like the Yam God. In association with the Wind God known as Vayu, he sustains life by giving rain and protecting crops.

He is the presiding deity of the western direction and of water in all its forms including all aquatic life forms.

Iconographically, he is shown as riding on a crocodile. He has four arms—one holds a serpent, the other holds a snare or noose. Sometimes he is depicted as riding a chariot of Swans, and holds a lotus in his right front hand, a noose or snare in the front back arm, a vessel of gems in the left front arm, and a conch in the left back arm. There is a ceremonial umbrella over his head.

This Varun God is offered prayers and honoured in the Vedas in numerous places, such as the following—Rig Veda—1/25; 2/28; 5/85; 7/86-89; 8/41; 10/124/5, 7, 8; Sam Veda—589; Yajur Veda—4/31; 10/7; Atharva Veda—5/1-2; 20/92.

The 'Aditya' or the Sun God is also worshipped as Varun during the fourth Hindu month of Ashad also known as Shuchi (roughly corresponding to mid-June and mid-July).

The 'Mitra-Varun' God represents the clubbing together of the twin factors of creation that are apparently opposite to each other but nevertheless help to maintain a cosmic equilibrium, such as the appearance of day (Mitra) and night (Varun) together. It is obvious that the day and night cohabit and it is impossible to imagine life without any one of them.

Varun is the deity of water, i.e. the Water God. No life is imaginable without the elixir of life known as water. Hence, Varun is regarded as the Mitra God.

Similarly, it is impossible to imagine life without either fire or sun represented by the Mitra God, and water or moon represented by the Varun God.

Mitra-Varun are depicted as eternally youthful (Rig Veda, 3/54/10). They appear together in Rig Veda—1/37, 1/152, 3/62/16-18, 7/501, 7/61, 10/132/2-7; in Atharva Veda—5/24/5; in Yajur Veda—7/9, 21/8.

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse no. 38 says that Varun or the Water God is one of the ten Digpaals or custodians of the ten directions of the celestial globe. He is the patron deity of the western direction and worshipped in that corner. Verse no. 39 says that his weapon is known as Paash or sling or snare.

The *Devi Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 4 says that the Varun God is a manifestation of the Mother Goddess, who actually represents the dynamism of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being. The Goddess is the energy, authority and powers of Brahm that are employed by the latter to create and control this creation, both at the macrocosmic level as well as the microcosmic level. The Varun God is therefore the dynamism of Brahm revealed at the macrocosmic level.

The importance of water and its relationship with food and Tej or energy and heat has been elucidated in Taittiriyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in its Valli 3, Anuvak 8. Let us see what it has to say—"One should never show disrespect to Anna

(food)—this is the great tenet. Verily, ‘Apaha’ or water is Anna¹. ‘Jyoti’ (the light of consciousness present in the body as its vital life force) is the entity which enjoys food and it is for it that food is eaten².

Jyoti (light in the form of heat and energy as well as signs of life) is intrinsically present in water, and vice versa³. Hence, both are inter-dependent—life and heat depends upon water, and water depends upon them at the same time⁴.

A wise aspirant who is erudite and sagacious enough to understand this unique concept is firmly convinced of its veracity, and therefore he respects food and water with their eclectic divine virtues. Consequently, he is able to acquire the ability to digest food with the aid of water, and become prosperous and famed. He is well off with abundant livestock and offspring, and gets a good name and respect in the world⁵ (1).

[Note—¹This observation is very easy to understand. *Water* is the essential ingredient and component in the entire process by which food is made available in the first place, and then used by the body of the creature. It must be noted here that food needs water to grow, to be cooked, to be eaten, to be digested by the body with the help of digestive enzymes, to be circulated in liquid form as blood and then absorbed in the body through this fluid medium, and finally the toxic matters are eliminated in the form of urine and semi-fluid excreta. Even mucous and flesh that act as buffers and cushioning matters in the body are made of water as their chief ingredients. In fact, the major part of the body’s weight consists of water.

Water is synonym with life as is evident from the fact that rains and monsoons are welcomed with cheers and festivities in all parts of the world, because without rains there would be drought and no crop to provide with food, and this would result in famine. When scientists search for signs of life in the universe, they search for traces of water molecules as these are sure shot signs of life no matter how distant in time it might be.

The importance of *Apaha* or water is emphasised in many other Upanishads, such as Chandogya of Sam Veda tradition—2/4, 5/16, 6/5/2, 6/6/3, 6/8/6, 7/10 etc., and in Brihad Aranyak of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—2/1/8, 2/5/2, 3/7/4, 3/9/16 etc.

That is why water is regarded a ‘God’ known as Apaha.

²The food that the creature eats is meant to keep the *fire of life* burning inside the body. Fire gives *light*, and this light is a metaphor for the divine effulgence emanating from the pure consciousness in the form of the Atma or soul residing inside the body of the creature in whose service the body and all other components of it are employed.

³Even in mythological lore, Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush in his cosmic gross form, reclines on surface of the Kshir-sagar, which is the celestial ocean of milk, on a bed made of the coiled body of the Shesh Nath, the legendary serpent.

The fact that water has inherent abilities to foster life shows that it must have some inborn ‘heat and energy’ called *Tej* in it, without which no life can be either conceived or sustained. It is indeed possible to have *Tej* in water as is proved by the fact that water of hot water springs is boiling hot while in the deep recesses of the ocean and the seas it is warm. This explains the concept of ‘water having *Tej* in it’.

Now, we come to the next proposition—‘water is present in *Tej*’. This can be understood when we see the functioning of the body of any warm-blooded creature. Water forms the major part of the weight of the body of such creature, and water has the natural tendency to extinguish fire and is inherently cold to touch. So apparently these two things—warmth which comes with the presence of the fire element on the one hand, and coldness which implies that this fire is not there—cannot co-exist. But the fact that they do in the warm body proves the point that ‘water and *Tej* can co-exist’ to sustain life.

This applies also to food. Water is needed to cook food, it is needed to eat it, digest it, absorb it and eliminate it, but it does not rob the inherent energy and warmth present in the food nor does it hinder the food from delivering its energy and heat to the creature in order to sustain its body.

⁴This concept of *life and heat depending upon water, and water depending upon them* at the same time' is very much similar to the case of Pran as explained in Anuvak 7. If there was no water, no food would be useful for the man because of obvious reasons—right from its growth as crop to its cooking, eating, digestion and elimination from the body. At each step water is needed. Tej in its metaphor of Fire would scorch the earth and snuff out all forms of life if there was no water to counter its ferocity.

⁵This verse highlights the importance of conserving water. It is to be shown the same respect that one shows for food. In fact, food and water can be regarded as the twin legs on which the entire edifice representing the living creatures in this creation stands.]

The *Chandogya Upanishad* of the Sam Veda tradition, Canto 7, section 10 describes the importance and significance of 'Apaha', literally meaning water.

"Verse no. 1 = Sanat Kumar said to Narad, 'Apaha (water) is superior to Anna (food). This is the reason why life seems a terrible burden and tormented when there is lack of rains, because that would mean less water to drink and less food production. On the contrary, if the rains are adequate, the 'Pran' (life) feels happy and contented that there would be sufficient supply of water and food. The entire creation—earth, sky, heavens, mountains, Gods, humans, birds, animals, insects, worms and ants as well as vegetation, big and small, are like the personification or an embodiment of water. Water has manifested itself into these forms. They owe their existence to water; they are an image of water; they are deeply obliged to it.

Hence, oh Narad, you should worship, adore, admire, praise and honour the water element as being superior to Anna' (1).

[Note :- (i) Narad is advised by Sanat Kumar that water has more importance for a creature than food because without water there cannot be growth of food. The food can't be eaten, digested and assimilated by the body in the absence of water. Without water, there will be no crop, and starvation and death will result. Drought can wipe out life from large tracts of earth as is evident in deserts where there is no water to sustain vibrant and verdant vegetation which not only sustains humans but also all types of animals and other creatures dependent upon them.

(ii) Three fourths of earth is water. It is not only visible as oceans, seas, rivers and lakes etc. but is also present invisibly beneath the upper crust of the land mass. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that we are simply 'floating' on water just like a ship does at sea. The body of all living beings, whether they are plant or an animal, consists largely of 'fluid' portion as its major component. Even apparently dry things have water concealed in them—e.g. the tree. From the outside, this tree has a thick bark which is dry, but every botany student knows that vessels (xylem and phloem) present inside it carry water and nutrients from the ground to the tip of the tree. Similarly, the body of all organisms, from a single cell Amoeba to the complex human body, the major part constitutes of water. Even the 'spark of life' in the form of the sperm needs a 'fluid medium', the semen, to remain active and reach the ova in the female to fertilise it. The internal structure of the ova is also jell-like, necessitating the presence of water.]

“Verse no. 2 = A person who worships, adores or honours ‘water’ as possessing the divine, ethereal and eclectic qualities of Brahm¹, or sees Brahm as being inherently present in the element called water as its integral part, is able to have his reach, if he so wishes, as far as the realms of water extend. He feels contented and have all his desires fulfilled.’(2)”

[Note :- ¹Water obviously has all the qualities which are necessary for life. It was the first essential element which formed the foundation or basis for creation of life in the cosmos. The water element was created by Brahm as a means to sustain life and to provide it with the cooling effect to counter balance the scorching effect of the fire element. Without water, as modern science proved, there cannot be anything which we understand as ‘life and creation’. By saying that Brahm has these qualities which water possesses, the sage intends to tell Narad that water should be respected not because of its taste and physical qualities but because of its inherent and intrinsic subtle qualities of sustaining life in this cosmos. One must realise that without water, no life is possible; it is the foundation of life. So water should be treated with due respect; it should not be wasted.]

(e) The Earth element or PRITHIVI—

Earth element or Prithivi—The Earth is worshipped as a goddess known as Prithivi. In this form, she appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/22/15. Earth is a feminine gender and is regarded as the mother of all creation (Atharva Veda, 12/1/12). It bears the mountains, the plant and the animal kingdom; it is regarded as a symbol of fertility and an un-ending supply of nourishment and necessary things that are needed to sustain life in this world. (Rig Veda, 5/84/1). The word earth means ‘one that is vast, extended, spread, sprawling, immense, huge and large’ (Rig Veda, 2/15/2).

Prithivi (Earth) appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/22/13-15, 159-160; 4/38/1; 5/84; 7/53; 7/104/23; 10/59/8-9; Sam Veda—368; 622; Atharva Veda—6/3/2; 6/17; 19/4.

The Earth element is the grossest of the five essential elements created at the beginning of creation, but ironically it is the base upon which the rest of living world rests, is rooted to, is built upon and has its foundation. All living beings, right from one-celled organisms to the most highly evolved and complicated creatures exist on earth. The variety of life that is founded on earth has no parallel anywhere in the rest of the universe. According to the Purans (ancient Hindu mythological history), the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, colossus and all-encompassing form of the supreme Brahm has the high heaven as his head and the earth as his foot. The rest of the creation lies in between.

All incarnations or manifestations of the Supreme Being have taken place on earth, and it is the earth that has been blessed by the birth of so many great prophets and sages and seers. No other planet in this solar system, or for that matter any other corner of the universe, has this fortune. None of the other four primary elements that came into being as the first building blocks of life at the beginning of creation, viz. the fire, the water, the air and the sky, have this great blessing or ability to independently sustain life endlessly. In fact, none of them would be able to make life happen and foster it if the earth refused to help and cooperate.

The very fact that earth harbours life and nourishes it all its varied forms in its bosom or womb is respected and acknowledged by giving it the revered title of being a 'mother'. That is why earth is called 'mother earth'. None of the other four elements that came into being alongside earth at the beginning of creation is honoured with any such title, either a mother or a father!

The 'mother earth' is so magnanimous, large-hearted, forgiving and gracious that inspite of it being exploited for unknown centuries it still goes on providing all the essential things necessary for life, endlessly and without complaining, and in abundance. All living beings are born on earth, live on earth, and die and perish on earth. The 'mother earth' is so careful about her off-springs that she ensures that the other four essential ingredients of life that the supreme Creator created along with her at the time of imitiation of creation, such as fire, water, air and space or sky, always remain near at hand. All the corners of earth have them without exception, and all corners of earth harbour life in some form or the other.

-----*****-----

The Pentagon of Creation

According to the Upanishads

Chapter 2

THE PANCH PRANS

(The five vital winds)

There are a number of Upanishads that describe the various aspects of Pran, the vital life giving wind or air element in all its different roles, along with explaining their importance and significance vis-à-vis this living world and the creation.

A reference list is as follows—

(i) Sam Veda—*Chandogya Upanishad* in its Canto 3, sections 13; Canto 5, section 1, verse nos. 6-15; Canto 5, sections 19-23 (describes how the five winds are satisfied; it also enumerates the Mantras pertaining to the five Prans); and Canto 7, section 15, verse no. 1; *Jabal Darshan panishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 23-34; *Maitrayanu Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 6-7 (which describes the functions of these winds).

(ii) Shukla Yajur Veda—*Subalo Upanishad*, Canto 9, verse nos. 1-14; *Paingalo-panishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 3; *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 5, 8-9; Canto 2, verse nos. 54, 77-87; *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 26; Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 3; Canto 4, Brahman 2, verse no. 4; Canto 5, Brahman 13; Canto 6, Brahman 1.

(iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—*Dhyandindu Upanishad*, verse nos. 55^{1/2}-60, 95-100; *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 28; *Amritnado-panishad*, verse no. 33-38; *Brahm Vidya Upanishad*, verse no. 17-19; *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 165-166, and Canto 5, verse no. 2; *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Valli 3, Anuvak 3, 7; *Kathopanishad*, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 10; *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 2 (especially describes the three methods to control the Prans); *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad*, verse nos. 11-12, 14-17 (which describe the fingers that are directly related to the five principal winds and the Mantras of these winds).

(iv) Atharva Veda—*Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 10 (that says that Pran controls all the activities of the body); Canto 4, verse nos. 42-43 (that say that the Chitta Vrittis inspire the Prans to become active), 85-89 (that say that control of Pran is equivalent to control of Vasanas, and briefly outline the methods by which Pran can be controlled); Canto 5, verse nos. 25-32, 50-53 (its verse nos. 52-53 aver that for a self-realised ascetic, the terms Pran and consciousness are the same); *Prashna Upanishad*, Canto 2-3; *Mundak Upanishad*, Canto 3, section 1, verse no. 4; *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 12-13; *Atma Upanishad*, verse no. 18 (says that the body is

kept active by the vital winds); *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 2 (the 4 aspects of Pran; that Pran moves through four Naadis); *Bhavana Upanishad*, verse no. 2/21-25.

(v) These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas' *Adhyatma Ramayan*, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 38-39.

The *importance of the control* of the Pran, Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) and Vasanas (inherent passions and desires) has been stressed in the Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 41-92, and in Canto 5, verse nos. 40, 43.

Now, we shall discuss the different connotations and aspects of the Pran, with special emphasis on its five chief forms that are called the 'Panch Prans'.

The *Vaishwanar Pran*—Reference: Krishna Yajur Veda's Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 17.

The phrase 'Vaishwanar Pran' (pronounced as Vaishwaanar Praan) refers to the vital life sustaining force of Nature that prevails throughout the creation in a most subtle form. The word 'Pran' means 'life', and it also means 'consciousness', because both these terms go hand in hand. The word 'Vaishwanar' means an entity that has a cosmic presence. Hence, this aspect of Pran refers to the vital spark of life that is present in a subtle form everywhere, just needing the right time and circumstance to leap into physical existence. It is inexplicable and undefinable, but nevertheless undeniable. Just like the space or the sky element that has its unique characteristic of being omnipresent, the Vaishwanar Pran is also omnipresent and almighty as it is the primary force that controls all forms of life.

Now, let us examine what the *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad*, verse no. 17 says on this subject—

"The Viraat Purush or the supreme Brahm in the form of the Atma (i.e. as the pure consciousness residing in the body of the aspirant as his true self) has special divine attributes that are characteristic of it. It makes such rare efforts that only it can make. Those who have a worldly view of things cannot even think or imagine of how the Atma works or behaves¹.

A wise and enlightened man who has become self-realised and has understood the esoteric secrets of this Atma (that it is not an ordinary entity but the Supreme Being himself residing in the body, and that the body is not the truthful identity of the spiritual aspirant but it is this Atma which is pure consciousness) does the fire sacrifice in a symbolic manner daily by offering oblations to the Supreme Being with his Prans. This form of constant and regular fire sacrifice is called 'Pran Agnihotra'².

[That is, he offers his each breath as an offering to the sacred, divine Being residing in his inner self as the Atma much like one offers oblations to the worshipped deity while doing a formal fire sacrifice. His breathing process assumes the form of a continuous offering to this Lord. Even each morsel of food that he eats or each gulp of water that he drinks is a form of oblation in this symbolic fire sacrifice. These offerings are made to the supreme Brahm residing in the heart of the worshipper as his Atma. The body is merely a carrier of this Atma; it is a medium by which this Atma is worshipped. Since the body harbours all the five principle elements of creation, such as the earth, water, fire, air and sky, it is a microcosm of the cosmos that has evolved from these elements. The Atma in this context would be the counterpart of the cosmic Ishwar or

Ishan who rules over the entire world. Since the body also harbours all the five forms of the vital winds that sustain life in this creation along with the sacred fires, all that is eaten and drunk are like sacred offerings made to the fire pit of the formal external fire sacrifice done in order to honour the Lord of creation. In the case of the internal form of the fire sacrifice, the deity to be worshipped is the 'self'. One should very closely follow the hidden meaning of this verse and not get confused. The performer of this fire sacrifice is the 'self', the deity to be worshipped is also the 'self', the fire pit is the body, the sacred fire is the fire burning inside the body that keeps it alive and active, i.e. the Pran, the offering to the sacred fire is the food eaten, and the oblation or libation offered to the deity is the water drunk by the worshipper. The 'self' is the Atma which is the true identity of the worshipper, and hence it is the one who performs this fire sacrifice. Since this Atma is the Parmatma personified, it is the deity worshipped by this process, and hence it is the 'self' that is worshipped! The different patron Gods of a formal fire sacrifice are Indra (the King of Gods), Varun (the Water God), Marut (the Wind God), Agni (the Fire God), Aditya (the Sun God), Chandra (the Moon God) etc., and all of them are represented by the various organs of the body that are sustained as a result of the food eaten and water drunk with the holistic view of doing a fire sacrifice because all these Gods had taken up residence in various organs at the time of creation (refer Aiteriyo Upanishad of Rig Veda). The body of the creature is a microcosmic representative of the Viraat Purush (refer Aiteriyo Upanishad). This is very holistic, all-inclusive, spiritually enlightened and philosophically highly evolved way of doing a fire sacrifice.]

Since the individual forms of Pran have their origin in the *cosmic Pran known as the Vaishwanar* or the Viraat Purush or the Parmatma, it follows that they are his off springs. A wise and enlightened person makes the sacrificial offerings with this eclectic and holistic view.

[That is, he would be symbolically offering his own sons as the sacrifice if he would just realise that his Prans have the same importance as the son has for him. This is the highest and ultimate form of sacrifice that a man can make.] (17).

[Note--¹Worldly people eat and make merry; they eat to keep the body healthy so that they can enjoy the comforts and pleasures that the body derives from this world through its organs of perception and action; they eat to gratify their taste buds and their natural urge to enjoy food and its taste. So they can not think of the vital winds, the consciousness and other subtle elements of creation that constitute this body. It is beyond their sphere of comprehension to understand the working of the Pran and how they are differentiated into different types and then merge into one indivisible unit. They eat and drink not for the purpose of sustaining the Spirit in their body, or harnessing the energy and strength of food and drink to make efforts to break free from the fetters of this body and find liberation and deliverance from it. In short, they ridicule the idea of worshipping water and food as embodiments of the supreme God. They forget that the term 'God' is not limited to some awe inspiring deity living high up in the heaven to wield the baton of fear and punishment for disobedience from high up there in order to make his flock obey him. But the supreme Lord is very much present inside the body of the worshipper, and it is to this resident deity that this food and water is being offered. So when the food eaten and the water drunk are shown respect, it is not a nonsensical rite but a very wise act on the part of the enlightened man. This act of his would also ensure that he shows due respect to food and water, and not waste them or cause any form of misuse of them.

²As long as the man is alive, he continues to breathe silently. All other winds also continue to do their respective duties silently, without any fuss and raising a hue and cry.

If a man is enlightened enough and fully conversant with the philosophy of the fire sacrifice meant for the supreme Brahm as propounded in this Upanishad, he would be unconsciously even doing a constant fire sacrifice and offering a constant stream of oblations to the Lord while he breathes and while his vital winds continue to do their assigned functions. This is his silent prayer and silent fire sacrifice. He need not sit for a specified time in front of a physical fire to offer his oblations to the supreme Lord. And neither does he need to offer specially cooked food or specially procured drink to the supreme Lord by offering them to the fire pit, as whatever he eats and drinks becomes his offering to the eternally burning Vaishwanar fire present inside his own body. This is the holistic approach to the fire sacrifice.

The term Agnihotra literally means offering oblations to the sacred fire. It is usually of two types—one that is done daily and completed in a month's time every year, and the other that is done throughout one's life. These are related to the external forms of fire sacrifices and the deity that is worshipped is the Fire God. The first type of Agnihotra is done by a Brahmin in the month of Basant according to the Hindu calendar which corresponds to the Spring season, by Kshatriyas in the month of Grisma corresponding to the Summer season, and by Vaishyas in the month of Sharad corresponding to the Fall or Autumn season. The second type of Agnihotra is done twice a day—during early hours of the day at dawn, and in the evening hours around dusk.

The type of Agnihotra espoused by the present Upanishad is life-long one because here the Pran or breath is regarded as an offering to the Atma, and a man continuous to breathe as long as he lives.]”

Now, since the ‘Pran’ is the universal life-sustaining force of creation, we shall now read about the five chief forms that it takes. These are called the Panch Prans or the five forms of the same vital air. It is given these five names hypothetically for the purpose of understanding and analysis. Otherwise, there is no real distinction between any of the five forms of the air or wind element; they are the same. It is like the classic example of giving different names to the sky element depending upon where it is present—for instance we have the space within a pitcher being called a Ghataakash [‘Ghata’ = pitcher; ‘Akash’ = sky], that inside the walls of the monastery as the Mathakash [‘Math’ = monastery; ‘Akash’ = sky], that in the vast atmosphere around the earth as the Mahakash [‘Maha’ = great; ‘Akash’ = sky], etc.

Basically, there are the following chief form of the Pran Tattva—‘Pran’, ‘Apan’, ‘Samaan’, ‘Vyaan’ and ‘Udaan’.

The word ‘Pran’ has been defined and its primary role explained in section no. 1 of this book while dealing with the five Tattvas.

Though it is not possible to quote all of the Upanishads here, we shall however select some of them to learn about the Panch Prans and the important role they play in creation.

(1) Sam Veda's *Jabal Darshan panishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 23-34—

“Verse nos. 23-25 = There are 10 so-called ‘Pran Vayu’ (vital winds sustaining life of a creature). These are the following— ‘Pran’, ‘Apan’, ‘Vyaan’, ‘Samaan’, ‘Udaan’,

‘Naag’, ‘Kurma’, ‘Krikar’, ‘Devdutta’, and ‘Dhananjay’. These vital winds circulate through all the veins and nerves of the body (23-24). Out of these, only 5 vital winds are important. Oh sage! Even out of these 5, only ‘Pran’ (breath) and ‘Apan’ (the wind passing down the elementary canal in the form of flatus) are considered the most important and venerated ones (25) [23-25].

“Verse nos. 26-29 = Oh the most exalted sage! The vital wind called ‘Pran’ dwells in the nostril, the mouth, the center of the navel and the heart (26). The ‘Apan Vayu’ is always present in the anus, rectum, genitals, thighs, knees, the entire stomach, hips, the navel region, and the area below it up to the genitals (27).

The ‘Vyaan’ wind dwells in the ears, the eyes, the two shoulders, the elbows, and all other places where ‘Pran’ (the first wind) dwells, including the throat (28).

The ‘Udan Vayu’ has its location in the hands and the legs, while the ‘Samaan Vayu’ is, without doubt, spread over the whole body (29) [26-29].

“Verse nos. 30-31 = The remaining 5 winds are present in the skin and the bones. Oh Sankriti! The ‘Pran Vayu’ enables a person to inhale, exhale and cough (30).

The ‘Apan Vayu’ enables the passage of stool and urine (the functioning of the excretory organs). Oh great sage! The ‘Samaan Vayu’ maintains the equilibrium in the body (31) [30-31].

“Verse nos. 32-34 = The ‘Udan Vayu’ goes up into the head. Those who are experts in the principles of Vedanta believe that the ‘Vyan Vayu’ activates the powers of speech (32).

Oh great sage! The ‘Naag Vayu’ is responsible for belching, vomiting etc. [The word ‘Naag’ means a serpent, a dragon.] Oh Sankriti! The ‘Dhananjay’ wind is responsible for beauty and good looks of the body. [Such as a taut, wrinkle free, glowing and shiny skin, erect and good posture, robust built and well developed muscles, shoulders etc.] (33).

The ‘Kurma Vayu’ enables the closing and opening of the eyelids. The ‘Krikar Vayu’ creates hunger and thirst, while the ‘Devdutta Vayu’ creates laziness, sluggishness, lethargy, indolence, inertia etc. (34) [32-34].

(2) Sam Veda’s *Maitrayanu Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 6-7 describes the functions of these winds as follows—

“Verse no. 6 = Brahma, the creator of the visible world, replied to sage Valkhilya, ‘Oh great sage! In the beginning there was only ‘Prajapati’—the Lord of the subjects, the primary and principal king or the one from whom the creation was produced) alone. He did not enjoy being alone, so he thought of or remembered his Atma (to remove his loneliness). That is, he invoked his hidden potentials and powers of creativity in order to fulfill his desires of not being alone. As a result of which he created his myriad subjects having so many different forms with so many permutations and combinations. The creation which he produced or crafted appeared lifeless and dead as a pillar. Then looking at his subject, the creation, which lacked life, activity, intelligence, agility and vitality, he

decided to enter their bosoms (inner-selves) to make them live, active, intelligent, vibrant, vigorous, strong and agile.

[Prajapati was dismayed and distressed at his own creation which he had created to remove his loneliness, because the product which he produced was lifeless and worthless and was of no use to him. The circumstance of loneliness remained as before. 'What is the use of creating a lifeless litter if I can't enjoy playing with them, if I cannot enjoy their company', thought Prajapati.]

So he assumed a subtle, invisible, imperceptible but most potential and magnificent form of the 'wind element' (the vital wind called 'Pran' and other winds) and entered the litter produced by him. Prajapati split himself into 5 components of the wind force (Vayu) which are the following—(i) Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udana and Vyana (6).

“Verse no. 7 = The wind that goes up (e.g. breath) is called 'Pran'. The wind which goes downwards (e.g., flatus passing downwards in the intestine and out through the anus) is called 'Apana'. The wind that helps in uniformly circulating the elementary nutrients of the gross food eaten by the creature so that they reach the 'Pran' as well as all the organs of the body, thereby giving them nourishment, vitality and strength in basic elementary forms (e.g., proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, vitamins etc.) which can be assimilated by them for their use, is called 'Samaana'. [Hence 'Samaana' regulates circulation and functioning of the internal organs other than the alimentary canal.] The wind that helps excretion is called 'Udana'. [That is, the wind that produces vomiting and expulsion of stool, throwing of cough etc. is called Udana.] The wind that maintains equilibrium and pressure inside the body is called 'Vyana' (7).”

(3) Shukla Yajur Veda's *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87—

“Verse no. 77-78 = Pran, Apana, Samaana, Udana, Vyana, Nag, Kurma, Krikara, Devadatta and Dhananjaya---these are the ten vital winds which move in the Naadis (the veins and nerves) of the body. Out of these, the first five (Pran, Apana, Samaana, Udana and Vyana) are more important, and even amongst them the first two (Pran and Apana) are considered most important [77-78].

“Verse no. 79-80 = It is the Pran (the first wind) that bears life for the creature, i.e. it is the Pran which enables the creature to move and show other signs of life. Oh exalted sage! This Pran is said to have five subtle habitats or sites where it locates itself. These are---mouth, nostrils, heart, navel and the big toe of the feet. The Apana wind has the following locations---anus, lower part of the abdomen, upper part of thighs and the knees. [79-80].

“Verse no. 81 = The Samaana wind pervades in the whole body uniformly, the Udana wind is present in the hands, legs and all the joints of the body [81].

“Verse no. 82 = The Vyana wind stays in the ears, thighs, waist region, heels, shoulders and throat. The other five winds such as the Nag etc. are found in the skin, bones and other parts [82].

“Verse no. 83 = The Pran Vayu (wind) collects the food, water and digestive juices in the stomach and mixes them to form a paste. Thereafter, this paste is separated into different forms once again---the fiber part of the food forms the stool, the water content forms the urine, while the digestive juices form the important fluids of the body such as blood and semen etc. [83].

“Verse no. 84 = The Pran Vayu does all this independently or literally standing all by itself and seeking no help from any other wind. The Apaana Vayu helps in excretion of stool and urine from the body [84].

“Verse no. 85 = The efforts made by the Pran Vayu, the Apaana Vayu and others to accomplish their assigned tasks is aided and complimented by the Vyan Vayu. The Udaan Vayu present in the body helps the latter to rise up or get up from a sitting or reclining position. (This ‘rising’ is a metaphor for spiritual enhancement also.)[85].

“Verse no. 86 = The nourishment and sustenance of the body is done by the Samaana Vayu because it helps in circulation of the blood. Passing of the wind upwards, such as during belching, is done by the Nag Vayu, while opening of the eyes is done by the Kurma Vayu [86].

“Verse no. 87 = The Krikar Vayu creates hunger, the Devdutta Vayu creates sleep etc., while the Dhananjay Vayu prevents the body from getting deformed immediately after death and delays decay of it for sometime [87].

(4) Krishna Yajur Veda—*Dhyanbindu Upanishad*, verse nos. 55^{1/2}-60, 95-100—

“Verse no. 55-57 = The ten vital winds in the body are called Pran. They are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaan, Vyan, Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta, and Dhananjay. Out of them, the first five are the chief Prans while the last five are subsidiary Prans (5-57).

“Verse no. 58 = The subtle vital forces of life called Pran collectively move and oscillate in these thousands of Naadis, injecting life or ‘Pran’ into the otherwise lifeless gross body of the creature. The living beings move up and down under the influence of the Pran and Apaana respectively¹ (58).

[Note—¹In metaphysical terms this means that they attain spiritual upliftment when their Pran is more active, while they get demoted to the mundane world of lowly life marked by grossness and inertia when the Apaana wind is more active. In more physical terms the movement of Pran refers to the process of breathing, while the movement of Apaana refers to the peristaltic movement that helps the food to move down the intestines. The breath (Pran) which brings in fresh oxygen-laden air inside the body and helps to rejuvenate the tissues on the one hand and removes toxic gases and other lighter waste products of the body when it is exhaled, and the movement of food in the alimentary canal, its digestion and expulsion of waste products from the body governed by the Apaana wind are both essential and indispensable parts of life because no life can survive without either of them.]

“Verse no. 59-60 = The Pran (here referring to the breath passing through the nostrils when one breathes) moves sometimes through the path which goes to the left (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Ida Naadi passing up to the left nostril), and sometimes through the one that goes to the right (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Pingla Naadi passing up to the right nostril). The Pran wind is so subtle and sublime that it cannot be visibly seen.

Just like a ball thrown at random by the player moves restlessly in various directions, bouncing here and there and changing its course every now and then unpredictably, the creature is also buffeted and kicked around (like the ball) by the two prominent winds called the Pran and Apaana, and he moves restlessly in so many places (and in so many wombs or takes so many births).

The tug and pull of these two winds on the creature is much like a bird being pulled down by the string tied to its legs while it attempts to fly off in the sky. An ascetic who is well acquainted with this fact is regarded as really wise and enlightened. (59-60)

“Verse no. 95 = Above this so-called ‘half-triangle’ is the site where the brain is located, and therefore is the site where the thinking powers of the creature, the stupendous powers mind and intellect to contemplate and fix attention on something, to discriminate and analyse, to rationalize and deduce anything systematically as well as their creative and constructive powers of imagination are located. [This area is the cerebrum.]

A wise practitioner should meditate and contemplate upon the primary elements along with their primary colours and their relevant Beej Mantras here.

Therefore, he should next meditate and contemplate upon the basic elements of creation such as the earth etc. (the others being water, fire, air and space) as well as the five vital Prans (winds such Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana and Samana) along with their root words (called the ‘Beej’ Mantra or the basic letter that symbolises them and represents their inherent subtle strength and powers), their specific distinguishing marks and classifications (called their ‘Varns’), and their locations (called their ‘Sthaan’) in this creation.

The Beej or seed letter of the Pran wind (the primary air which infuses life inside the gross body; the breath) is the Sanskrit alphabet ‘Ya’. It has the hue of purple or violet or reddish blue, and it represents the rain bearing clouds that are harbingers of life on earth.

The Beej or seed letter of the Apaana wind (the primary air which moves downwards in the body and helps in food intake and its movement through the intestines, its digestion and elimination from the body) is the Sanskrit alphabet ‘Ra’. It has the hue of golden yellow resembling the brilliant sun, and represents the fire element (95).

“Verse no. 96 = The Beej or seed letter of the Vyan wind (the primary wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds) is the Sanskrit alphabet ‘La’. It has the hue of red like the colour of the flower called ‘Bandhuk’ (a flower that blooms in the middle of the day), and it represents the earth element.

The Beej or seed letter of the Udaana wind (the primary wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body

through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough) is the Sanskrit alphabet ‘Va’. It has the hue of shining white like that of the conch shell, and it represents the Jiva or the living being in this creation (96).

“Verse no. 97 = The Beej or seed letter of the Samaan wind (the primary wind that helps the body in equal distribution of nourishment throughout it, as well as in the circulation of blood) is the Sanskrit alphabet ‘Ha’. It has the hue of the colour crystal, and it represents the taintless, colourless and pristine pure sky element in creation.

This Samaan wind lives in the heart, navel, nostrils, ears and the big toe of the foot (97).

“Verse no. 98 = It (Samaan wind) also lives uniformly in all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts of the body) as well as in the twenty eight crore (1 crore = 10 million) roots of hairs present in the body (98).

“Verse no. 99 = It is to be noted that Pran wind and Samaan wind are not two distinct winds but are essentially the same wind element hypothetically classified into two types just for the sake of convenience of study—primarily they are one, they refer to the same living entity which cannot survive even for a fleeting second without the presence of any one of them.

So a wise practitioner of meditation should steady his mind and attention, and not allow it to be stupidly and unduly get disturbed in futile debates about these artificial classifications of life giving entities known by different names. Thus, becoming steady in his convictions, he should diligently practice the three phases of Pranayam such as Purak (inhaling wind or air), Kumbhak (filling the body with this inhaled air and holding it inside for certain time) and Rechak (exhaling this trapped air from the body). [This would help in mixing all the winds in the body, because no artificial boundaries are present inside the body that could prevent the various winds from mixing freely.] (99).

“Verse no. 100 = He should draw all the forms of the wind element from different parts of the body and concentrate them into the core of the subtle heart (where his pure conscious ‘self’, the Atma, resides). To enable this to happen, he would have to prevent the vital winds from escaping from the body by stopping their exit in the form of the Pran wind (the exhaled breath) and Apaana wind (the flatulence passing out of the anus). [Verse nos. 73-93 describe how this is brought about.]

To aid in this enterprise, he should focus his attention of meditating upon OM in a holistic way. (100)”

(5) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 28—

“Verse no. 28 = There are twelve principal Naadis (tubular ducts in the body) that bear the twelve vital winds. [That is, the twelve vital life-sustaining airs of the body move through these channels present inside the body to support the entire body and give it its conscious sensation of life and vitality.]

(6) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Amritnado-panishad*, verse no. 33-38—

“Verse no. 33 = The area measuring thirty-and-a-half fingers width (i.e. the region approximately between the nostrils or upper lips and the lower end of the lungs) is the place where the Pran or breath lives and moves. This is the vital area of the body where the air or wind that keeps the body alive moves. If this air called the ‘Pran’ stops moving, i.e. if a man can’t breathe fresh air, then the rest of the vital winds present inside the body would lose their importance and relevance for the simple reason that the body would be dead without breath. This part of the vital wind measuring 30 ½ fingers-width is the air that remains inside the body as opposite to the wind that is present outside the physical limits of the body. This air is not visible like the air that is present outside though both are called ‘Pran’ and are synonymous with breath. The air retained inside the body is however the one which is the foundation upon which the whole edifice of life rests though it cannot be seen or observed physically by the creature like the air present outside¹ (33).

[Note—¹The Pran or the vital air or wind element that sustains life inside the body but present outside it can be visually ‘seen’ as is evident when a mist forms outside the nose during cold weather or when breath is exhaled on a cold surface whereby a thin film of moisture collects on the cold surface. But no one can see the component of breath that is located inside the body. When one breathes, the internal air is not completely exhaled; some part is withheld inside the lungs and its tubes. This component is the Pran that is not visible, while the one that is exhaled is visible Pran.

The word Pran has two connotations here—one refers to the ‘breath’ and the other to the vital ‘life forces’ that it sustains inside the body of the creature. The latter form of Pran is synonymous with consciousness because both are indicative of ‘life’. This verse is dealing with this aspect of Pran. The next verse no. 34 will deal with the former aspect of Pran, i.e. with ‘breath’ as a synonym of Pran. Broadly speaking, the word refers to the vital air or wind element in the body or outside of it because no life can be sustained without the presence of vital gases such as oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen etc. which are inherently present in the air which we breathe in and breathe out daily.

The air we breathe is called Pran by the Upanishads because it is the fresh inhaled breath that injects ‘life’ in the otherwise lifeless body. The rest of the Prans, such as Apan, Saman, Vyan and Udan depend on this Pran to function and remain active, for what good are they in a dead body?]

“Verse no. 34 = The Pran that is external to the body—that form of Pran or vital wind that moves in and out of the body as compared to the Pran that cannot leave the body unless it dies—is represented by the cycle of inhaled and exhaled breath. During the course of one day and one night, one takes approximately one lakh, thirteen thousand, six hundred and eighty breaths (i.e. 1,13,680 breaths) (34).

[Note—When one breathes, some part is always retained inside the body. This is the ‘internal Pran’. The ‘external Pran’ would then be the air that is inhaled and exhaled—the part of breath that is located just outside the nostrils. Usually it is believed that a man breathes approximately 21000 times during the course of a single day, so the figure of 1,13,680 mentioned here in this verse perhaps refers to a healthy man involved in strenuous exercises such as doing manual labour when he would breathe faster. Or it indicates the fact that this is the maximum number of breaths one can take in a day’s time.]

“Verse no. 35 = The primary and principal vital wind called ‘Pran’ lives in a subtle form in the subtle space of the heart (and keeps this organ functioning); the vital wind called ‘Apan’ lives in the region of the anus (and is responsible for excretion of the residue from the intestines); the ‘Samaan’ wind is found in the navel region (because it is from here that all the nerves and veins in the body radiate out from the nerve center or core called the ‘Nabhi Kand’, and ensure that nutrients and other essential supplies are equally distributed in the body); the ‘Udaan’ wind lives in the region of the throat (because this wind is synonymous with the notion of ‘getting up’ or ‘rising’, so it symbolises the creature’s state of wakefulness when he speaks out, and at the same time it helps it to ‘raise’ and spit out cough present in the lungs) (35).

“Verse no. 36 = The vital wind known as ‘Vyan’ spreads through the body (as it helps in maintaining equilibrium).

Now, the subtle colours of these five Prans symbolising the five forms in which the vital wind force in Nature exist are being mentioned (36).

“Verse no. 37 = The main Pran (breath which is at the core of life) is said to be red-coloured like a ruby. [This is a symbolic representation of the fact that this form of air is rich in oxygen, which in turn oxidizes the cells and help in producing red-blood corpuscles and hemoglobin in the body.]

The Apan wind present in the anus is like a red-coloured insect called ‘Indragop’ or an insect called ‘Birbahuti’ which has a scarlet colour like velvet and appears when the first rain falls. [That is why the anus region is red in colour, and malfunctioning of this vital wind creates piles which are red in colour, or bleeding dysentery or diarrhea which is also red in colour.] (37).

“Verse no. 38 = The Samaan wind is located in the area of the navel and is said to be white like cow’s milk or alum. [This is indicative of the presence of mucous and lymph and other intercellular and inter-muscular fluids in the body which are not red in colour as blood is.]

The Udaan wind is smoky and grey in colour (like the fluffy clouds floating across the sky). [And that is why the cough or mucous raised in the throat is predominantly of this colour.]

Finally, the Vyan wind has the glorious and splendorous colour like the tip of the flame of a burning candle. [This indicates that the flame is steady and burning brightly, without being subjected to any disturbances from any external factor, such as a gust of wind. Hence, this Vyan wind maintains a healthy and well-proportioned body which is not disturbed by any worldly influences. Such a healthy body has a radiant and glowing appearance, and its skin is taut and thus literally shines in the pink of its health.] (38).

(7) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Brahm Vidya Upanishad*, verse no. 17-19—

“Verse no. 17 = This essential entity known as the Atma (soul or pure consciousness) of the living being (creature) is pure and wholesome like the clarified butter which is extracted by churning the milk, and is a refined and purest essence present in it¹.

This Atma is known by the five dimensions or parameters of life called the ‘Panch Prans’, or the five forms in which life exists in this world² (17).

[Note--¹In other words, the Atma is the purest form of life in this world. It is the real essence of life in all its forms. It is immaculate and uncorrupt; it is wholesome and without any faults associated with the world much like the butter which has nothing to do with the adulteration of milk with water, for once the butter is extracted from milk it loses its wholesomeness. The ‘churning’ of the milk is a symbolic way of indicating that the Atma is hidden in this world and can be known only by diligent effort, by deep research and contemplation, by doing meditation and study.

²The five forms of life or Pran refer to the five basic elements in existence—such as earth, water, fire, air and sky. These five are the fundamental building blocks of life much like the atoms which are at the core of the molecules that combine in various permutations to metamorphose into the uncountable number and variety of gross things in this world. Taken in their physical elementary forms, all of them are lifeless entities, but the great mystery of creation is that the same elements exhibit stupendous life-bearing abilities in this world in their subtle forms. Thus, there must be some mystical power that helps them do so, and it is this power that is being referred to here as the consciousness or Atma. When these elements are injected with the Atma, they begin to show vital signs of life and activity. To illustrate this point, we can take a simple example of a balloon. When the balloon is filled with air, it tosses about on its own; if it is filled with some light gas, it even rises on its own to reach high altitudes. The earth is a lifeless clod of mud or hard rock, but the same earth harbours an astounding variety of vibrant life forms in its bosom. The factor that helps bring about this is known as the Atma.

The five Prans are also called the five forms of the air or wind element which infuses life in the creature’s body. These five vital airs are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyana. The statement that ‘the Atma is known by the five dimensions or parameters of Pran’ establishes that the two entities—the Atma and the Pran—are synonymous with each other; they are like the two sides of the same coin known as ‘life’.

The five forms of Prans are called the Atma’s five ‘Kalaas’, and they have been described in verse no. 18 below.]

“Verse no. 18 = Just like the milk is churned by the churning rod, the main vital wind present in the body, called the Pran, keeps the four other forms or aspects of this vital wind, called its four Kalaas¹, to remain activated and circulating in the body through the medium of the four sections of the heart². [In other words, the breath called the main Pran keeps the body alive, thereby ensuring the heart beats and helps in circulating the blood and the other four forms of the Pran inside the body.] (18).

[Note—¹The word *Kalaa* refers to the different aspects or forms of an entity. The Pran is the vital wind or air element that sustains life in a man. The chief form of this air element that sustains life in the body is called ‘Pran’, and the term is usually applied to the breath. But besides this, there are four other types of main Prans such as Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyana. These are the names given to the vital wind in order to distinguish between the various functions or roles that it performs inside the body. This classification is done in order to study this air or wind element in a comprehensive way just like we classify any given subject into various streams or branches to facilitate study and analysis. Therefore, hypothetically, the Pran is divided into five main Kalaas. Thus, there is the main Pran and its four Kalaas as follows—(i) The ‘Pran’ is the wind element which, as breath, is

exhaled as well as inhaled and is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without the life-infusing breath, no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. (ii) The 'Apan' is the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys). (iii) The 'Saman' is the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood. (iv) The 'Udan' is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. (v) And finally the 'Vyana' is the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

The main Pran or breath is the one which keeps the entire machinery working. If a man stops to breathe, or when his supply of fresh breath is cut off as in the case of strangulation, then neither can the heart nor the remaining four vital winds can keep him alive. The heart would cease to beat and the other four Kalaas of the Pran would become defunct as soon as the Pran (breath) is cut off.

The breath or Pran is depicted here as a 'churning rod'. If we see the structure of the wind pipe, it indeed looks like a length of pipe, resembling a churning rod, going down into the body from the opening of the nostrils.

From the metaphysical point of view, there is another dimension of this verse. The body of the man is said to have the following five Kalaas which represent the five sheaths that surround his Atma or pure consciousness—the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma and determine the Atma's characters, temperament, nature, inclinations and behavioural patterns in this world. The Pran Maye Kosh is the churning-rod here because the rest of the body is kept alive by its energizing and revitalizing effect.

²The heart has four sections—two auricles and two ventricles. The four must work in harmony and with perfect coordination in order to keep the man alive. The Pran as breath keeps the heart beating and supplies fresh oxygen to the body which oxidizes and revitalizes the various tissues and organs of the body while at the same time helping to remove or purge the body of all impurities and toxins such as poisonous gases like carbon dioxide etc. that have accumulated due to metabolic activities inside it.]

“Verse no. 19 = The great and swift Bird symbolising the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature, which incidentally is the true identity of the latter, resides in a restless manner in this body¹.

When the breath stops, i.e. when the body dies, the living being called the Jiva becomes lifeless or loses all his Kalaas². In other words, when the Pran leaves the body, all other vital signs of life also cease to exist, and the Jiva shows no characteristics and attributes that had distinguished it while it was alive. [This is because all dead bodies are alike. It is only when a man is alive that each individual person depicts his unique personality and character traits, his typical way of speaking, behaving, writing, interacting, thinking etc. So symbolically, when the breath is stopped, he also stops to exhibit his uniqueness and individuality. The 'Jiva' dies as soon as the breath known as the Pran stops. What remains is the 'non-Jiva' aspect of the gross body.] (19).

[Note—¹The Atma is compared to the big bird such as a falcon or eagle or kite which is accustomed to a free-flying life in the sky being suddenly trapped in a small cage. This bird would become extremely agitated and restless.

It is 'restless' in the sense that it is never satisfied with this body and never finds peace while residing inside it. It always wants this and that; it is in a constant state of uneasiness and flux. The bird would be endlessly restless and clawing at the walls of the cage in its attempt to break free; it would be hopping mad from one corner to another in its bid to find a way out of its prison-like confinement though no string might be tied to its legs to keep it in forced bondage and the bird-catcher might even give it proper and adequate food to eat.

It is 'swift' because as soon as it finds an opportunity it would immediately fly off to freedom. Similarly, the Atma takes a fraction of a second to leave the body when the creature dies. There is another connotation to the word 'swift'. The subtle mind is very agile and swift as it keeps on changing from subject to subject like a bird hopping around when picking grains from the ground. Even the gross body is very restless and swift in the sense that it continuously changes position from moment to moment; it is fidgety and twitchy.

In the context of the Atma which represents the creature's 'true identity and his true self', the condition is similar. The bird got caught because of its greediness and ignorance that it is being trapped when it swooped down on the bait shown by the bird-catcher. The Atma similarly got trapped in this body when it got enticed by the attractions and charms of this deluding and entrapping world. Since the world can be enjoyed by the medium of a gross body having organs of perception and action and not in the ethereal form of the Spirit and Consciousness that do not have any grossness in them, the Atma willingly fell in the trap of acquiring a body for its self. It was then too late for it; once inside the body it began to experience its horrors and limitations, and yearned for freedom.

But even as the bird is so stupid that if once given a chance to fly free it would again fall prey to another bait, the Atma of the creature also leaves one body at the time of death and re-enters another body instantly in the hope of further enjoying the material comforts proffered by the material world and the pleasure derived by the gross organs of the body, instead of remaining eternally free like the ethereal Spirit. Another reason for it to enter another body is the fact that in the earlier one the Atma had thought that the deeds done by the body were actually being done by it and therefore it is entitled to their rewards or benefits. Since this is not possible in one life time and also since the last deed done would bear results after some time, the Atma takes another body. Besides this, there are many unfulfilled desires and aspirations of the previous phase of life in the earlier body which needs to be addressed by the Atma. This is the reason for it taking a new birth.

²As has been explained in note to verse no. 18 above, the word 'Kalaa' refers to changeable aspects of an entity. A dead body does not show any signs of life such as movement etc. It remains in a static and unchanging state. This is what is meant here—as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the latter loses all signs of change. The erroneous notion that the creature had harboured that the body is his 'true self' is used here while referring to the body as the 'Jiva'. It has already been said in the first stanza that the Atma is restless and swift—i.e. it is ever changing and agile, an aphorism for having Kalaas.]”

(8) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 165-166, and Canto 5, verse no. 2—

“Canto 1, verse no. 165 = 165. When the self-realised and enlightened ascetic becomes one with the supreme Brahm and indistinguishable from the latter, his body no longer

remains a mere city with ten gates or doorways and ten avenues represented by the ten chief Naadis¹. But upon self-realisation, this body dissolves its independent existence and becomes one with Brahm and indistinguishable from the latter in the sense that it is henceforth identified by the primary elements called the Bhuts—earth, water, fire, air and sky elements—from which it is primarily made just like the bubbles of water merge and vanish in the water from which their were formed initially² (165).

[Note—¹The body is likened to a *city* because the pure consciousness known as the Atma and the true ‘self’ of the creature lives in it. The Pran, which refers to the vital winds present in the body and which keep the body alive and active, enables the Atma to enjoy its residence in the body, for had the Pran not allowed the body to remain alive and active, the latter would have been useless for the Atma. A body without the Atma is like a dead city.

The *ten doors* of this city are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit present on the top of the head).

There are said to be *ten chief Naadis* in the body. They are the chief ducts present inside the body through which the Pran—vital life-consciousness represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive and distinguishes a living body from a dead one—moves while the man sleeps (refer Paingal Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. They are likened to broad avenues of a grand city in which the Atma lives. According to Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse no. 15-17, they are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hasti-jivaha, Pusa, Yashaswani, Alambusa, Kuhu and Shankhani.

Refer Canto 5, verse no. 2 in this context.

²The entire creation has come into being from one single source known as Brahm. The five elements called the Panch Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) are the primary building blocks or bricks that are cast from the same original source called Brahm. The gross body of the creation was moulded from these five elements. Therefore it follows as a corollary that the creation can be regressed and traced back to come to that single point. Since the elements from which the gross body of the creature is crafted are lifeless entities, it follows that the former is also lifeless. The factor that makes the body ‘alive and living’ is called the pure consciousness and it is the ‘self’ of all living beings. In other words, a wise ascetic sees the body as a revelation of the elements, while his ‘self’ as a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm which infuses life into this otherwise lifeless body.]

“Canto 1, verse no. 166 = This body is filled by ten types of vital winds¹. It has ten Indris or sense organs (five organs of perception and five organs of action)². The body is supported by six Chakras (swirling subtle energy centers)³, and it roams around in a great forest consisting of six Vishayas (objects of the sense organs of perception)⁴ (166).

[Note—¹The *ten winds* are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay.

²The *ten organs* of the gross body are the following—five organs of perception such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action such as hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital.

³The *six Chakras* are the subtle energy centers of the body which act as power houses which supply energy for the various functions of the body. They are the following--(1) The ‘Mooladhar Chakra’ is located between genitals and anus in the area called the perineum; (2) The ‘Swadhisthan Chakra’ is located in the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in

the female is the clitoris. (3) The 'Manipur Chakra' is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy; (4) The 'Anahat Chakra' is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like an 8-petal lotus facing down; (5) The 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' is located in the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. (6) The 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra' is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom.

Refer Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad, Canto 3 of Rig Veda tradition, Dhyandindu Upanishad, verse nos. 44-49 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as Yograjopanishad, Yogchudamani Upanishad, and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4 of the Sam Veda tradition.

⁴The six objects of the body pertain to the five organs of perception and one mind = six. The five perceptions are sight (eye), smell (nose), sound (ear), taste (tongue) and feel or touch (skin) + all the things about which the mind thinks = six in total. The sense objects of the material world are categorized into six groups according to these six faculties of the body. For instance, all things that have a shape, fixed contour, colour and form are the subject matter of the eye and the faculty of sight. Similarly, things that emanate a smell are the subject matter of the organ of the nose and the faculty of smell; things that emanate sound are the subject matter of the ear and the faculty of hearing; things that have chemicals that induce taste are the subject matter of the tongue and the faculty of taste; things that can be felt and touched are the objective of the skin and the faculty that gives the sense of touch and feel; and finally those things that require thoughts, imagination, comprehension, rationality, analysis and application of intelligence are the subject matter of the mind.]

"Canto 5, verse no. 2 = The body is like a city (in which the Atma representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, who is the Lord of creation, lives). It has ten holes or apertures (openings) with ten doors (gates) guarding them¹. The chief ten Naadis (ducts)² of the body are this city's ten main avenues in which ten types of vital winds³ move about. This body is supported by five organs of perception and five organs of action⁴ (2).

[Note—Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 165-166 which state a similar thing.

¹The *ten doors* of this city are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit present on the top of the head).

²There are said to be *ten chief Naadis* in the body. According to Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse no. 15-17, they are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hasti-jivaha, Pusa, Yashaswani, Alambusa, Kuhu and Shankhani. They are the chief ducts present inside the body through which the Pran—vital life-consciousness represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive and distinguishes a living body from a dead one—moves while the man sleeps. They are likened to broad avenues of a grand city in which the Atma lives.

³The ten vital winds are the following-- Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyaana, Nag, Kurma, Krikan, Devdutta and Dhananjay.

⁴The five organs of perception are the following—ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin. The five organs of action are the following—hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals.]”

(9) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Valli 3, Anuvak 3, 7—

“Anuvak 3 = Upon doing severe Tapa, Bhrigu understood the truth of the statement that Pran is Brahm personified¹. Verily, all the forms of life and living creatures have their origin in Pran; upon birth they depend upon Pran for their survival; and upon death they become one with Pran².

After that, he once approached his father Varun, seeking more knowledge about Brahm. ‘Oh father! Please preach me more about Brahm’.

Varun advised him—‘You should try to realise and understand Brahm by the medium of Tapa. Tapa is Brahm personified; Brahm is known by doing Tapa’ (1).

[Note—¹*Pran* is a synonym of life forces present in this creation, especially in relation to the body of the creature. It also supports life in the form of the vital winds which are also called Pran. Since Brahm has these virtues, and since Pran is wind in its basic form, it is an apt personification of Brahm. Nothing can survive in a vacuum if there is no air to breathe life into it, so Pran is Brahm as Brahm fills up all available space in creation even as the air element fills up the entire length and width of the space of the sky in creation.

The importance of Pran vis-à-vis Brahm has been explained in note to Anuvak no. 1 above.

²Obviously, the word Pran here refers to the *vital wind* or air which is breath and other vital winds in the body, such as Apaana, Udaana, Vyan and Samaan etc. which sustain life in the otherwise lifeless and inane gross body and helps it to carry on with its functions. When the creature dies, its vital winds leave the body and merge with the air element present outside the body just like the air present inside the balloon merges with the atmospheric air when the balloon is punctured.]

“Anuvak 7 = One should make a vow not to criticise or contemptibly treat Anna or food¹. Pran is Anna, and the body is the consumer of this form of food². Both are dependant upon each other³.

Since the gross body called the ‘Anna Maye Kosh’—or the food sheath as it is formed from what the creature eats—in which the pure self of the creature called its Atma lives, and since Pran also lives in it in the form of its ‘vital life’ and the various ‘vital winds’ which enables the body to survive, perform its different functions, and live a fruitful life, it can be safely said that ‘Pran lives inside Pran’⁴.

A wise aspirant who is erudite and sagacious enough to understand this unique concept is firmly convinced of its veracity, and therefore he respects food and its eclectic divine virtues of life-creation and life-sustenance which are the unique powers exclusively possessed by Brahm. Consequently, he is able to acquire the ability to digest food⁵, and become prosperous and famed. He is well off with abundant livestock and offspring, and gets a good name and respect in the world (1).

[Note—¹This tenet of *respecting food* for its life sustaining properties is very relevant today also as it was many centuries ago when the Upanishads were composed as the world now faces an acute and unprecedented food crisis. As with other edicts of the Upanishads, directions given by erudite seers and sages ages ago are timeless ones, and they are evergreen principles no matter which time zone or geographical area they are applied to. Food is not to be wasted, and it ought to be shared with everyone even as the Atma and Pran are no single person's fiefdom. This is borne out by the next observation in this verse that Anna is Pran. Pran is another word for ‘wind or air’ element, and wind or air cannot be restricted in the barn of the rich hoarder.

²*Pran* is a synonym of 'life' and of the 'vital winds' that sustain life in the *body* of a living creature. A body consumes fresh air in the form of breath rich in oxygen ; it inhales fresh air and expels impurities laden air rich in carbon dioxide and other gases much like a chimney in a factory. At the same time, it also uses the other forms of the same air element present inside it to keep going normally. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the body 'consumes' *Pran*.

³The *body cannot survive without Pran* because *Pran* means breath as well as the other vital winds that sustain the body from the inside and help it to carry on with its functions. If one stops breathing for instance, one would immediately suffocate to death. The *Pran needs the body* to dwell and have its importance displayed because it is the ability of the ordinary air element to keep the otherwise dead and inane body alive and active that it is so lauded and revered in this world. Had the wind or air element failed to do so, who would have bothered to honour them, for no one pays heed to things which are not of direct utility to him. Air is universally present everywhere, but one honours it in the 'form of *Pran*' and not in any other form as far as life on this earth is concerned. And this honour is available to *Pran* as long as there are creatures with a body, for otherwise it won't be respected by dead bodies, or by a machine that does not need *Pran* and therefore it would not need to pay its tribute to it.

In brief, the honour and respect available to *Pran* and its utility is only till the time there are living creatures having a body that needs to breathe and that depends upon the vital airs to function. This is a symbiotic relationship between the *Pran* and the body of the creature.

⁴There is another way of looking at this concept of *Pran living in Pran*. Food has an inherent virtue of sustaining life, and life is the basic factor that lends value to food. Both are inter-dependent. Thus we can say that 'life (*Pran*) lives in life (its life sustaining properties), and vice versa (i.e. life sustaining properties are inherent and integral to *Pran*)'.

⁵When one begins to treat *Anna* or food as a divine blessing for the living world and a personification of *Brahm* in the form of the essential nutrients that manifest themselves as the life-giving vitality, stamina, vigour and energy present in food, called the '*Pran of Anna*', he begins to pay great respect to *Pran* and *Anna* that is usually reserved for some revered deity. So he stops indulging in overeating as well as gobbling up junk food for the purposes of satisfying his taste buds, and instead eats with care and wisdom only those things which are nutritious for the body, which are auspiciously acquired and which are sanctioned by the scriptures.

Food is to be eaten with the holy and eclectic view that it is like an offering to the sacred fire burning inside the body so that the different Gods who have taken up residence inside the body in a symbolic manner are given their due nutrition and paid tributes for sustaining the body and keeping it fit enough so that the supreme *Atma* representing *Brahm* can live comfortably in it. The fact that food is not a medium to satisfy the desires of the sense organs for indulgence but a means of sustaining the abode of the *Atma* (i.e. the body) has been explained in *Chandogya*, 3/17/1-2. It says explicitly that those who treat food with the respect due to some holy entity go to an exalted higher abode, while those who treat it as a means of enjoyment of the senses go to a lowly world. Therefore, food is to be worshipped as a symbol of the supreme *Brahm*'s astounding virtues of sustaining and nourishing this world.]”

(10) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 2 (especially describes the three methods to control the Prans)—

“Verse no. 2 = There are three methods for obtaining control over the Pran, i.e. doing Pranayam or breath control exercises of Yoga successfully—(a) Mitaahaar (control over what is eaten by eating moderately and correctly), (b) Aasan (various sitting postures of Yoga), and (c) Shakti Chaalan (activating the subtle energy centers in the body, such as the activation of the Kundalini, and making them upwardly mobile along with the vital winds of the body, especially the Apaana wind) (2).”

(11) *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad*, verse nos. 11-12, 14-18 (which describe the fingers that are directly related to the five principal winds and the Mantras of these winds)—

“Verse no. 11. [This verse describes how the sprinkling of sanctified water mentioned in verse no. 10 is to be done.]

The oblations offered to the Pran (by way of sprinkling of water) are done in the following sequence—the thumb and the little finger are used to sprinkle water meant as an oblation offered to the Pran wind, the thumb and the third finger for the Apaana wind, the thumb and the middle finger for the Vyan wind, the thumb and index finger for the Udan wind, and the thumb and all the other four fingers together for the Samaana wind (11).

[Note—It would be noted here that each finger is linked directly to a particular wind. This assumes great significance in the field of Yoga practice where various Mudras are adopted to control the different vital functions of the body along with the harnessing of the vital winds and their inherent energy and strength to obtain success in one's spiritual endeavours. During Mudras, which are the various poses of the hand and body while doing meditation, the thumb is pressed at specific points on one or the other finger, singly or collectively. This pressure of the thumb against a finger helps to exert control over the specific wind that is related to that finger, and the point on the finger determines the location of the body where this wind needs to be controlled or concentrated or manipulated for the purpose of Yoga. This is akin to the technique of acupressure wherein pressure is applied on specific points on the body to help alleviate pains and other bodily ailments. So for example, if the need is to control the Pran wind, pressure is to be exerted by the thumb against the little finger as this finger is directly related to this particular wind. This principle is applicable to all other winds as described in this verse. It is a well organized and scientific method to cure one's self of all ailments that have their origin in disturbed vital winds in the body, which in Indian medical system is called 'Vayu Dosh', the fault of the wind. The pressure of the thumb against the relevant finger helps to modify the functioning of the wind and the part or organ of the body that is controlled by this wind.]

“Verse no. 12 = Then the five sacred fires are offered oblations by silently¹ remembering the five Mantras meant for the five types of vital winds, one by one. [This is an important verse because it establishes the link between the five types of Prans, the vital winds, and the five sacred fires.]

So, the first oblation is offered to the first fire represented by the main vital wind called Pran² (breath) by mutely humming the first Mantra (meant for the Pran wind—OM Pranaye Swaha).

The second oblation is offered to the second fire called ‘Ahawaniya³’ by mutely humming the second Mantra (meant for the Apan wind—OM Apanaye Swaha).

The third oblation is offered to the third fire called ‘Dakshinagni⁴’ by mutely humming the third Mantra (meant for the Vyan wind—OM Vyanaye Swaha).

The fourth oblation is offered to the fourth fire called ‘Garhapatya⁵’ by mutely saying the fourth Mantra (meant for the Udaan wind—OM Udanaye Swaha).

The fifth and final oblation is offered to the fifth fire called ‘Sarwa-Praschitya⁶’ by mutely saying the fifth Mantra (meant for the Samaan wind—OM Samanaye Swaha) (12).

[Note—¹The Mantras are said in a silent manner or mutely hummed as the worshipper is honouring these sacred fires present symbolically in his own body and not outside in the fire pit of the formal fire sacrifice. These internal fires are symbolically kept burning by the means of the five vital winds which are present inside the body. The Garbhopanishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, also asserts that the body of the living organism is called ‘Deha’ or body *because* it harbours the Fire element in it. The body is like the ‘fire pit’ of a formal fire sacrifice, and the Lord that is worshipped by offering oblations to this fire pit would then obviously be the Atma residing inside this body. This Atma is Brahm personified at the micro level of creation.

The Agni Vidya pertains to the metaphysical knowledge of the various facets of the eternal fire element which is at the root of creation—because any form of life necessitates the unavoidable presence of energy, heat and light which are the grand and unique virtues possessed intrinsically only by the fire element. No life on earth is tenable and even imaginable without the involvement of the quintessential fire element. The divine fires have been described to Nachiketa by the God of death, Yam, in Kathvalli or Kathopanishad, 1/1/1-20 of Krishna Yajur Veda. They have also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13 of Sam Veda tradition.

The five holy fires mentioned in this Upanishad are the following—(i) ²*Pran* or breath. This is considered as the ‘fire’ from the practical point of view also as it is to be observed that any fire can be ignited and kept burning only if there is an adequate amount of fresh air; otherwise it would be extinguished and life that depends upon air is suffocated to extinction. It is to be remembered that it is the breath that pumps in air in the body, and if a man is not able to breathe then all the other winds would automatically lose their importance and relevance because no life is sustainable and tenable without fresh air which is here referred to as the ‘Pran’, and therefore death would ensue. So, the breath, the Pran wind, is the most important aspect of life, and as such is a metaphor for ‘fire’ inasmuch as it keeps the body alive, energised, charged and ventilated besides keeping it well oxidised and detoxified. (ii) ³*Ahawaniya* is the fire lit to invoke the Gods and invite them to come and accept the offerings during a ritualistic sacrifice. (iii) ⁴*Dakshinagni* is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end. (iv) ⁵*Garhyapatya* is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies. And (v) ⁶*Sarwa-praschitya* Agni—which is the fire standing as a witness to one doing penitence, atonement, expiation and amends for his past errors, misdeeds and sins. This is symbolic way of burning all past sins along with their results, and thereby becoming purified and cleansed.

“Verse no. 14 = After eating, some water¹ is taken in the cupped palm of the left hand and held against the chest near the heart. The worshipper should do Japa (repetition of the Mantras pertaining to the five winds collectively called the Panch Prans², and their Lord, the chief Pran whom they all serve inside the body, called the Atma) while meditating in this posture.

[Now, the meaning of the various Mantras mentioned in verse nos. 14-18 by which Japa is done is being explained in the following verses one by one.]

‘The chief Pran, the vital spark of life inside the body which represents the vital life forces of Nature, is an image of the Supreme Being known as Parmatma, the Great Atma or the cosmic Soul or the cosmic Consciousness. [This ‘chief Pran’ refers to the Atma of the worshipper, his ‘true self’, his consciousness.] It is surrounded or cloaked in five sheaths called the Panch Vayus (the five vital winds—Pran, Apaana, Vyana, Udana and Samana). Let this exalted and revered chief Pran provide me with fearlessness from all the creatures. I may no longer be afraid of anyone. [In other words, let the supreme Brahm give me all round protection, because the Atma is a manifestation of Brahm and the Lord of the body along with the five Prans. The Atma, i.e. the worshipper’s own ‘truthful self’, is a counterpart of the cosmic Self known as Brahm. The Atma lives in the gross body of the individual as a representative of this Brahm whose body is the entire creation at the macro level of creation. This Atma is protected by the five vital winds called the Panch Prans—which are Pran, Apaana, Vyana, Udana and Samana. This protective ring of the five Prans around the Atma is like the Emperor being protected by a close inner ring of his bodyguards. Amongst the guards there is a chief guard, the head of the security apparatus, and this ‘head’ is the Pran, the breath, in the case of the vital winds that protect the Atma in the present case.] (14).

[Note—¹The importance of water is emphasised in many other Upanishads, such as Chandogya of Sam Veda tradition—2/4, 5/16, 6/5/2, 6/6/3, 6/8/6, 7/10 etc., and in Brihad Aranyak of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—2/1/8, 2/5/2, 3/7/4, 3/9/16 etc.

The importance of water and its relationship with food and Tej or energy and heat has been elucidated in Taittiriyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in its Valli 3, Anuvak 8.

²The metaphysical aspect of the wind element is the subject matter of discussion of the entire Canto 5 of the Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition. Other parts of this Upanishad relevant to Pran are, inter alia, 1/2/7-9, 1/11/5, 2/4/9, 2/6/1. The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 3 asserts that the Pran is a personification of Brahm.

The Mantras of the five vital winds, the Panch Prans, have been narrated in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, sections 19-23.]

“Verse no. 15 = Oh the chief Pran! You are an embodiment of the entire universe. [That is, whatever type of life forms that exist in this world are nothing but your manifestations. No life is imaginable without you; you are synonymous with life in all its vibrant hues.]

That is why you are honoured by the epithet ‘Vaishwanar’—the image of the entire world. It is you who has assumed the form known as the Viraat Purush who incorporates the entire creation in his own self. It is the Viraat who stands for the entire creation as it were his own self; the whole creation is in fact a revelation of Viraat Purush. This is the picture at the macrocosmic level of creation. [The Viraat Purush is the all-encompassing, infinitely vast, attributeless and invisible cosmic gross body of the

supreme Brahm that exists at the macrocosmic level of creation. It is from this Viraat that the rest of the creation has emerged. Therefore, the creation is an image of the Viraat just like the child is an image of its parents. The word ‘Vaishwanar’ refers to the entire world, the whole creation when viewed from the macrocosmic perspective. Since nothing can survive without Pran (air), it is indeed the supreme Authority upon which the survival of the whole edifice of creation rests. Say, of what use is a world which has no life—no ‘Pran’—in it?]

At the microcosmic level of existence, that Vaishwanar or Viraat is present in the body of each living being (in the form of the pure consciousness called the Atma as well as the vital Prans that inhabit the body of all living creatures—without both of which the creature would simply not survive).

You are an embodiment of Amrit (the essence, basis and fundamental aspect of anything; the elixir of life and eternity marked by extreme and infinite beatitude and felicity) that is regarded as being synonymous with Brahm¹.

This world that has emerged from you would finally disappear into you at the time of conclusion just like the final offering made to the consecrated fire disappears into it. In terms of metaphysics it can be said that the various Prans present inside the body as representative of this Vaishwanar would disappear into the cosmic Pran at the time of the Turiya state of consciousness² (15).

[Note—¹That is, the most important thing worth identifying in the body is the presence of this Viraat inside it. This all-inclusive holistic concept of treating the individual person’s body as an image of the cosmic Viraat Purush’s body and a microcosm of the colossal macrocosm is discussed in Shaarirak Upanishad. When a wise person has successfully inculcated this holistic view of the universe, he is deemed to have accessed the elixir of eternal life full of spiritual bliss. That is, he has experienced the presence of the cosmic all-pervading pure conscious known as the Atma inside his own self, the individual’s own Atma which is nothing but the cosmic Parmatma or the supreme Atma known as Brahm personified. The importance of Atma in the context of the cosmic Viraat has been dealt with in great detail in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 6 of the Sam Veda tradition.

²That is, when the spiritual aspirant rises higher in his spiritual practices and transcends the first three states of Jagrat or waking, Swapna or dreaming, and Sushupta or deep sleep state of consciousness to reach the state of Turiya—meaning the state which has crossed the other states to give liberation and deliverance to the creature, he virtually dissolves his independent identity as a man who has a body and who would wake up from his blissful sleep to suffer from the existential horrors of the external world. Instead, he remains perpetually submerged in the bliss obtained by being a non-entity that has no physical body that suffers. It is the physical body that sleeps or wakes up, it is the physical body that finds rest and peace while asleep, or remains active and gets tired when awake. The Atma is a distinct entity that neither sleeps nor wakes up, and therefore it neither has to find rest nor does it get tired due to physical activity. This can only happen when the wise and self-realised aspirant has realised his true self as the pure conscious Atma which is a fountainhead of bliss and happiness. Such an enlightened man is called Brahm-realised and self-realised.

This is a metaphoric way of saying that all the artificial distinctions between the different types of Prans and Fires are removed, and they all coalesce and merge into one single entity known as the Viraat or Vaishwanar from where they had emerged and then assumed their independent identities at the time of their creation.

The concept of Viraat and Vaishwanar has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, entire Cantos 5 and 7, as well as in Canto 3, section 13, verse nos. 1-6, Canto 3, section 14, verse nos. 1-3, and Canto 8, section 1.]

“Verse no. 16 = The consciousness and life giving vital forces in the body are so uniformly distributed in it that they are even present in the tip of the big toe of the foot which is considered as the remotest part of the body.

In order to derive the nectar of life from the food that is eaten (i.e. to derive the full benefit of food in the form of the nourishment and all the essential elements present in it that are needed to sustain a healthy body and happy life), I offer water to you at the end (i.e. I drink water in gulps or sip it as an oblation to the Pran at the conclusion of its worship)¹ (16).

[Note--¹It is this reason why water is needed to be drunk at the end of meals. It is a common thing and obvious thing to do. The reason is that without water, food is not digested, and it is the water that helps to dissolve its vital nutrients and then take them to the tissues of the body for absorption and use by the body. It is the water that then helps to eliminate waste and toxic matters in the form of urine which helps to get rid of liquid toxins and to soften solid waste so that it can be eliminated as stool. Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 5/2/2, 6/8, 7/10.]

“Verse no. 17 = The Viraat Purush or the supreme Brahm in the form of the Atma (i.e. as the pure consciousness residing in the body of the aspirant as his true self) has special divine attributes that are characteristic of it. It makes such rare efforts that only it can make. Those who have a worldly view of things cannot even think or imagine of how the Atma works or behaves¹.

A wise and enlightened man who has become self-realised and has understood the esoteric secrets of this Atma (that it is not an ordinary entity but the Supreme Being himself residing in the body, and that the body is not the truthful identity of the spiritual aspirant but it is this Atma which is pure consciousness) does the fire sacrifice in a symbolic manner daily by offering oblations to the Supreme Being with his Prans. This form of constant and regular fire sacrifice is called ‘Pran Agnihotra’². [That is, he offers his each breath as an offering to the sacred, divine Being residing in his inner self as the Atma much like one offers oblations to the worshipped deity while doing a formal fire sacrifice. His breathing process assumes the form of a continuous offering to this Lord. Even each morsel of food that he eats or each gulp of water that he drinks is a form of oblation in this symbolic fire sacrifice. These offerings are made to the supreme Brahm residing in the heart of the worshipper as his Atma. The body is merely a carrier of this Atma; it is a medium by which this Atma is worshipped. Since the body harbours all the five principle elements of creation, such as the earth, water, fire, air and sky, it is a microcosm of the cosmos that has evolved from these elements. The Atma in this context would be the counterpart of the cosmic Ishwar or Ishan (verse no. 8) who rules over the entire world. Since the body also harbours all the five forms of the vital winds that sustain life in this creation (verse no. 14) along with the sacred fires (verse no. 10), all that is eaten and drunk are like sacred offerings made to the fire pit of the formal external fire sacrifice done in order to honour the Lord of creation. In the case of the internal form of the fire sacrifice, the deity to be worshipped is the ‘self’. One should very closely follow the hidden meaning of this verse and not get confused. The performer of this fire

sacrifice is the 'self', the deity to be worshipped is also the 'self', the fire pit is the body, the sacred fire is the fire burning inside the body that keeps it alive and active, i.e. the Pran, the offering to the sacred fire is the food eaten, and the oblation or libation offered to the deity is the water drunk by the worshipper. The 'self' is the Atma which is the true identity of the worshipper, and hence it is the one who performs this fire sacrifice. Since this Atma is the Parmatma personified, it is the deity worshipped by this process, and hence it is the 'self' that is worshipped! The different patron Gods of a formal fire sacrifice are Indra (the King of Gods), Varun (the Water God), Marut (the Wind God), Agni (the Fire God), Aditya (the Sun God), Chandra (the Moon God) etc., and all of them are represented by the various organs of the body that are sustained as a result of the food eaten and water drunk with the holistic view of doing a fire sacrifice because all these Gods had taken up residence in various organs at the time of creation (refer Aiteriyo Upanishad of Rig Veda). The body of the creature is a microcosmic representative of the Viraat Purush (refer Aiteriyo Upanishad). This is very holistic, all-inclusive, spiritually enlightened and philosophically highly evolved way of doing a fire sacrifice.]

Since the individual forms of Pran have their origin in the cosmic Pran known as the Vaishwanar or the Viraat Purush or the Parmatma (see verse no. 15), it follows that they are his off springs. A wise and enlightened person makes the sacrificial offerings with this eclectic and holistic view. [That is, he would be symbolically offering his own sons as the sacrifice if he would just realise that his Prans have the same importance as the son has for him. This is the highest and ultimate form of sacrifice that a man can make.] (17).

[Note--¹Worldly people eat and make merry; they eat to keep the body healthy so that they can enjoy the comforts and pleasures that the body derives from this world through its organs of perception and action; they eat to gratify their taste buds and their natural urge to enjoy food and its taste. So they can not think of the vital winds, the consciousness and other subtle elements of creation that constitute this body. It is beyond their sphere of comprehension to understand the working of the Pran and how they are differentiated into different types and then merge into one indivisible unit. They eat and drink not for the purpose of sustaining the Spirit in their body, or harnessing the energy and strength of food and drink to make efforts to break free from the fetters of this body and find liberation and deliverance from it. In short, they ridicule the idea of worshipping water and food as embodiments of the supreme God. They forget that the term 'God' is not limited to some awe inspiring deity living high up in the heaven to wield the baton of fear and punishment for disobedience from high up there in order to make his flock obey him. But the supreme Lord is very much present inside the body of the worshipper, and it is to this resident deity that this food and water is being offered. So when the food eaten and the water drunk are shown respect, it is not a nonsensical rite but a very wise act on the part of the enlightened man. This act of his would also ensure that he shows due respect to food and water, and not waste them or cause any form of misuse of them.

²As long as the man is alive, he continues to breathe silently. All other winds also continue to do their respective duties silently, without any fuss and raising a hue and cry. If a man is enlightened enough and fully conversant with the philosophy of the fire sacrifice meant for the supreme Brahm as propounded in this Upanishad, he would be unconsciously even doing a constant fire sacrifice and offering a constant stream of oblations to the Lord while he breathes and while his vital winds continue to do their assigned functions. This is his silent prayer and silent fire sacrifice. He need not sit for a specified time in front of a physical fire to offer his oblations to the supreme Lord. And neither does he need to offer specially cooked food or specially procured drink to the

supreme Lord by offering them to the fire pit, as whatever he eats and drinks becomes his offering to the eternally burning Vaishwanar fire present inside his own body. This is the holistic approach to the fire sacrifice.

The term Agnihotra literally means offering oblations to the sacred fire. It is usually of two types—one that is done daily and completed in a month's time every year, and the other that is done throughout one's life. These are related to the external forms of fire sacrifices and the deity that is worshipped is the Fire God. The first type of Agnihotra is done by a Brahmin in the month of Basant according to the Hindu calendar which corresponds to the Spring season, by Kshatriyas in the month of Grisma corresponding to the Summer season, and by Vaishyas in the month of Sharad corresponding to the Fall or Autumn season. The second type of Agnihotra is done twice a day—during early hours of the day at dawn, and in the evening hours around dusk.

The type of Agnihotra espoused by the present Upanishad is life-long one because here the Pran or breath is regarded as an offering to the Atma, and a man continuous to breathe as long as he lives.]

(12) Atharva Veda's *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 12-13—

“Verse no. 12 = The ten Prans or vital winds symbolizing life-forces of the body that constantly move in the Naadis are the following—Pran, Apan, Saman, Udan, Vyana, Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta, and Dhananjay (12).

“Verse no. 13 = The Pran (i.e. the chief vital wind) moves or is located chiefly in the mouth, the nose, the throat, the navel, the big toes of the feet, and below and above the Kundalini.

The Vyana moves or is located chiefly in the ears, the eyes, the waist region, the thighs, the nostrils, the throat, and the hip region.

The Apan moves or is located chiefly in the anus, the genitals, the thighs, the stomach, the testicles, the hip area, the navel, and the midriff where the fire is present (refer verse no. 4 above).

The Udan is present and moves about in all the joints of the body.

The Saman is present and moves about in the hands and legs (limbs) and all other appendages of the body. It also helps in equal distribution of the nutrients of the food that has been digested inside the body by the help of the fire element to all parts of the body through the network of seventy-two thousand Naadis. Hence, the Saman wind also moves in all the seventy-two thousand Naadis and works in close association with the fire element. [There are fourteen chief Naadis listed in verse no. 9, while the closing stanza of verse no. 10 asserts that there are numerous other Naadis that form a network of Naadis exactly like the veins and capillaries seen in the leaf of a banyan tree.]

The other vital winds such as Naag etc. are subsidiary in nature and they live and move about in the skin, bones etc.

The vital winds that live in the stomach and middle part of the abdomen (i.e. the Apan and the Saman) help to separate the water (fluids, enzymes, digestive juices etc.) present in the stomach from the nutrients of the food eaten (after the food is digested), and then take the nutrients through the Naadis to all the parts of the body (while the fluid

portion and the grosser aspect of the food left after digestion and extraction of nutrients are taken to the organs of excretion, i.e. to the kidneys and the rectum respectively).

The Apaana Vayu keeps the internal fire responsible for cooking and digesting of food eaten burning. The food eaten is literally placed on the top of the water, and the water is placed on the fire which is stoked from below so as to heat this water which in turn cooks or digests the food eaten. [This is a simple kitchen of the body. The fire of the hearth represented by the abdomen is the triangular fire area mentioned in verse no. 4. The air needed to keep the fire burning and the grate of the oven ventilated is the Apaana wind. The stomach is the pot. The fluids present in it are the water. And the chewed or pulverized food that is put in the stomach is the raw material from which the nutrients are needed to be extracted. Once this is done, the Samaana wind would take these nutrients to the different parts of the body, while the waste matter is taken to the kidneys and the anus for excretion.]

The fire element present in the body is protected by the Apaana wind as the latter helps to keep it lighted and prevents it from being extinguished. [As in the instance of the cooking of the food cited above, the Apaana wind, which is predominantly present in the lower part of the abdomen, keeps the fire alive by fanning it from the below.]

This fire when stoked by the Prana Vayu (the vital winds) gathers heat and brings to a boil the water element present in the middle part of the body (i.e. the stomach) so that the vegetables and cereals that enter the stomach are properly cooked by it—i.e. the food is properly digested and its nutrients separated from the grosser aspects of the food such as the sweat, the urine, the blood, the semen, the various juices and other fluids present in the body (viz. the bile, the pancreatic juices, the various digestive enzymes, the mucous, the hormones etc.).

Once the process of digestion and separation of the subtle aspect of the food (i.e. its life-sustaining nutrients) from the grosser aspects (e.g. the sweat, urine, blood etc.) is complete, the Samaana wind takes over. In association with the Prana wind (i.e. the breath), it takes the vital nutrients thus segregated to all the corners of the body via the medium of the Naadis. The Prana wind meanwhile moves in and out of the body in the form of the breath. [It will be noticed here that the Prana wind, or the breath, acts like a pump that works from the surface and provides the other winds the necessary suction power to move against the forces of gravity and lift the nutrients as well as certain of the grosser parts of the food that are important for the body, such as the blood, the mucous, the bile and other juices, the hormones etc. to the upper parts of the body against the usual downward pull of gravity. This upward pull exerted by the Prana wind also helps the Apaana wind, whose natural inclination is to move downwards and out of the body, to remain inside the body and even move upwards to keep the fire element lighted, besides being able to activate the Kundalini during the process of Yoga.]

The vital winds eliminate the wastes present inside the body, such as the stool, urine, sweat etc., through the nine openings of the body into the space outside it. [The nine openings of the body are called its Doors, and they are the following—two nostrils, two ears, the hair follicles, the pores of the body, one mouth, one anus and one urinary organ which doubles up as the reproductive organ as well.]

[Now, the functions of the vital winds are being enumerated—] The Prana wind is responsible for breath and expelling mucous in the form of cough.

The Apaana wind is responsible for expelling stool and urine from the body.

The Vyaan wind is responsible for accepting or giving away anything.
 The Udaan wind is responsible for lifting the body.
 The Samaan wind is responsible for nourishing the body (as it takes the nutrients to all the parts of the body).
 The Naag wind is responsible for belching and excreting of contaminated or polluted wind through the throat and mouth.
 The Kurma wind is responsible for closing and opening of the eyelids.
 The Krikar wind is responsible for hunger and appetite.
 The Devdutta wind is responsible for creating laziness, lethargy and inertia.
 The Dhananjay wind is responsible for creating cough and other types of mucous that help to expel infection from the body (in association with the Apaana, the Naag and the Pran winds (13).

(13) Atharva Veda's *Prashna Upanishad*, Canto 2-3—

“Canto 2, verse no. 3 = The chief amongst these Gods is Pran, and he admonished the other Gods, saying, ‘All of you must stop bragging in vanity about your importance. The fact of the matter is that it is me who bears this body and give it protection with the help of my five manifestations (3).

“Canto 2, verse no. 4 = The numerous patron Gods did not believe this statement of fact made by Pran. To prove his point, Pran willingly decided to leave the body and began rising up (i.e. all the vital winds prepared to abandon the body and let the Gods defend the body's survival). As soon as this happened, the other life conscious factors in the different organs of the body, such as the faculty of speech located in the tongue and mouth, the faculty of sight in the eye, the faculty of intellect and thoughts located in the mind, and the faculty of hearing present in the ear too began to abandon the body along with the Pran. When the Pran stopped for a while, they too stopped.

This situation is like the queen bee and her retinue of worker bees. When the queen bee moves out, all the worker bees follow suit; when she sits down to rest, all the others too sit down to rest.

When the seniority of the Pran was irrefutably established, the rest of the patron Gods of the body offered their obeisance to it and worshipped it as their Lord. They accepted that Pran is the senior most amongst them all (4).

“Canto 2, verse no. 5 = It is this Pran that burns or gives heat, light and energy in its manifestation as the fire. It is the Pran that is known as Surya (the Sun), Indra (the king of Gods and the chief of all the patron Gods of the organs listed in the previous verses), Parjanya (water), Megha (rain-bearing clouds), Vayu (wind or air), Prithivi (earth) and Rayi (the grosser aspects of creation; the inspired form of Brahm; the dynamic powers of Brahm).

If nothing exist that is not Pran, it naturally follows that Satya (truth), Asatya (falsehood) and Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss) is also nothing but Pran in these forms (5).

[Note—There is a special Sukta or hymn dedicated to the Pran in Atharva Veda. It is called *Pran Sukta*, and is the fourth Sukta of this Veda's 11th Chapter.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 6 = Just like the spokes of a wheel are attached to the central hub, the hymns of the Rig/Rik Veda, the Mantras of the Yajur Veda and the Sam Veda, the two classes known as Brahmins and Kshatriyas, and the Yagya (fire sacrifices) are hooked or attached to or dependent upon the central axis called the Pran. [In other words, all these entities have any relevance only till the point there is life in the body. Pran is needed to recite the Vedas, Pran is needed to perform the fire sacrifices, and since the latter was financed and patronized by the Kshatriyas and actually performed by the Brahmins, they too depended upon the Pran.] (6).

“Canto 3, verse no. 1. The third question was asked by Kausalya, the son of Ashwal. He asked Pippalaad, ‘From where is Pran born or what is the source of its origin¹? How does it enter the body, and how does it come out of the body? How does it wear (sustain or inspire or keep alive) the external (gross) body as well as the internal (subtle) body of the creature?’ (1).

“Canto 3, verse no. 2 = Sage Pippalaad replied, ‘You have asked a very difficult question. But since you are sincere about your query and are steady in your pursuit of Brahm (Truth), I would answer it (2).

“Canto 3, verse no. 3 = [This verse answers the first two questions—‘from where is Pran created and how does it enter the body’.]

The Pran has its origin in the Atma (the pure consciousness). Just like a shadow has its origin in the presence of the gross body of the creature, or is dependent upon such a body, the Pran too has its origin from the Atma and is dependent upon the latter for its survival.

[The shadow is created because of the presence of the gross body; if the body is not there, the shadow would also be not there. The presence of the shadow proves the presence of the body. Likewise, the Pran is a shadow created by the consciousness residing in the body of the creature. Since the creator Atma is sublime and subtle, since the Atma is invisible, the shadow, the Pran, is also sublime and subtle, it also is invisible. If the Atma or pure consciousness leaves the body, the Pran would also leave the body. In other words, the presence of the Pran or life in the body of a creature proves that the Atma is still inside the body. They both stay and leave the body together.]

This Pran enters the body by the determination of the Mana. [When the Atma, which is the true ‘self’ of the creature, decides that it must make the body alive and active, it enters it, and in order to activate the lifeless body it pulls in the Pran alongside it to do what is needed. In other words, the Pran is the dynamism of the Atma in action.] (3).

[Note—The relationship between the Pran (vital airs) and the Atma has been elucidated in the Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 10 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition; the Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 35-38; Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse nos. 1-2. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 17 affirms that Pran and the Atma are synonymous with each other.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 4 = Just like a wise king appoints his ministers and other staff in all the districts and villages of his kingdom to carry out the work of administration smoothly, the chief Pran (breath) appoints the other Prans (junior or subsidiary Prans) to carry out specialised functions in the various parts of the body¹.

[The body is like the kingdom whose sovereign is the Atma. The Atma has the chief Pran as its chief minister to whom it delegates the power of running the routine affairs of the kingdom known as the body of the creature. This chief Pran is the breath as would be confirmed in verse no. 5 below. It appoints other Prans and sub-Prans to different duties and assigns them certain jurisdictions for fixing responsibilities. But they all obey the chief Pran and the latter obeys the call of the Atma. The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/3/35 describes how the various Prans present in the various parts of the body as the Atma or consciousness prevailing in these individual parts follow the call of the enlightened chief Pran or the Atma and moves along with it.] (4).

[Note—¹According to Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are fourteen Prans or vital winds present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).]

“Canto 3, verse no. 5 [This verse answers the third question—‘how does it move out of the body’, and partly answers the fourth one—‘how does it sustain the body’.]

The chief Pran itself moves out of the mouth and the nostrils, and establishes itself in the eyes and the ears. [This chief Pran is the first and foremost component of the vital winds present in the body. It is the breath that is being referred to here. It helps the creature to breathe, to see and hear.]

It appoints the Apaana Vayu (the second component of the vital winds present in the body, the component called Apaana) in the lower end of the body, i.e. in the anus and the genitals. [It regulates the excretory organs and the entire process related to conception).

The Samaana Vayu (the third component) is assigned the middle area of the body, the region of the abdomen. It is assigned the duty of distributing the food eaten by the creature (i.e. the nourishment derived from the food eaten) equally to all parts of the body.

It is from this Pran manifested in the form of Agni or fire (i.e. the energy, heat, strength, vitality and life consciousness that is derived by the digestion of the food eaten by the creature) that the seven flames (of life) are ignited and kept burning. [The seven flames or signs of life referred to here are the following—the two eyes and their ability to

see; the two ears and their ability to hear; the two nostrils and their ability to smell; the tongue and its ability to taste. The total comes to seven.] (5).

[Note—Verse nos. 5-6 describe the location and function of the various Prans in the body.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 6 = This Atma (pure conscious soul) lives in the subtle heart of the creature. There are one hundred and one Naadis or tubular ducts (nerves, veins and capillaries) in the region of the heart. Each of them has one hundred branches, and each branch gives out seventy two thousand finer Naadis. As a result, a fine and complicated network of Naadis is created (much like a wire mesh or matrix of wires in an electrical gadget) that spreads out from the heart to the remotest corners of the body.

The Vyan Vayu (the fourth component of the vital winds) is located in this network and moves along in it (6).

“Canto 3, verse no. 7 = Out of these Naadis, one, the chief amongst them, is called the Sushumna Naadi¹ and it moves in the upward direction. The Udaan Vayu (the fifth component of the vital winds) moves along this Naadi, and it is this wind that helps the creature to rise higher in his noble pursuits and spiritual stature in life if he is inclined towards auspiciousness, righteousness and nobility, or degrades and pulls him down to be demoted to a lower form of life if the creature is inclined to be sinful, evil, wicked, deceitful, pervert and indulgent in this world of delusions and grossness.

It is this Udaan Vayu that decides whether or not the creature remains turning in the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world² (7).

[Note—¹The Yoga Upanishads deal extensively with this *Sushumna Naadi*. It is the main nerve originating in the lower end of the spinal column and passes through it right up to the top of the head. During Yoga, the practitioner is taught to direct his Prans through this Naadi so that they can reach up into the head. As these Prans move up they meet the Atma in the heart, and the latter accompanies the Pran and heads upwards. When they reach the region of the head, the region of the forehead, the area of the cerebrum, the practitioner is said to have developed the enlightenment because the ‘third eye’ located in the middle of the eyebrows and the root of the nose is activated. At the same time some secretions effuse from this area of the brain which gives him the eclectic feeling of exhilaration and ecstasy that is unmatched and cannot be defined. He has no longer any awareness of either his body or the external world. As the Pran and the Atma move ahead, they reach the area of the cranium where the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit in the skull, is located. As the Pran begins to circulate here, the titillation reaches a crescendo and the experience of bliss and ecstasy is complete. Once this exalted spiritual stage of ‘high’ is reached, no man in his senses would wish to revert back to the world of problems. So, the wise ascetic finally allows his Pran to escape through this slit and go out of the body. The Atma escapes too along with the Pran—that is, the ascetic finds what is called Kaivalya Mukti, the liberation and deliverance which is one of its kind and from which there is no coming back into the body. The physical body left behind disintegrates on its own. This is because the life giving Pran has abandoned it.

²However, if the person is interested in this world, this achievement would be exploited by him for personal gain such as fame and money. This is because success in Yoga gives him certain mystical powers, called the eight Siddhis, that help him perform miracles, and this ability draws in the crowd of people to him, and along with the crowd comes fame, wealth, prosperity, pomp and pageantry. But all this hullabaloo demotes his soul and binds it to this world of materialism.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 8 = [This verse answers the fourth question—‘what is the external and internal forms of the body of the Pran’.]

The Sun is the external form of the Pran. The Sun obliges the Pran or consciousness that resides in the eye when it rises in the morning. [Since the Sun is high up in the heaven called the Duloka, the Pran wind has a natural tendency to move upwards. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the natural inclination of the Pran or the Atma is to reach nobler and higher goals in life. When one fixes one’s eyes on a noble target, the Pran feels excited and motivated to put in its best. Presently, the eyes can see anything only in the light of the Sun during the daytime. The faculty of sight located in the eye is useful and can become effective only if there is light in the world. Otherwise, even though the eye is there in the body the latter would not be able to see anything, and as far as the creature is concerned the existence of the eye that cannot see is as good as the body which has no eye. So, it is the Sun that obliges the eye in as much as the latter’s value is established only due to light of the Sun. The eye is always eager to look forward to the presence of the Sun to provide it with light to see. Since verse no. 5 of this Canto 3 has established that the chief Pran activates the consciousness or life (faculty of sight) in the eye, and earlier Canto 1, verse nos. 5-8, 10 has already established that the Sun God is the life of everything that exists, it obviously follows that the Sun is the external form of the chief Pran that resides in the eye and which enables the creature to live a meaningful and fruitful life on earth.]

The patron God of earth, i.e. the God named Prithivi, attracts the Apan Vayu, the wind in the lower part of the creature. [That is why the Apan wind has a tendency to move downwards. The earth pulls it towards itself. The location of the Apan wind in the anus is symbolic of the earth because all residue matter of the food is accumulated here, and this is why stool is called night ‘soil’—implying ‘earth’.]

The vacant space between the two, i.e. between the Sun and the Prithivi, is called the sky or Akash. It is here that the Samaan wind resides. [This is indicative of the sac-like abdomen located between the eye and the anus. Even as the sky harbours everything in existence, all the gross bodies of the solar system find their habitat in this space, the abdomen too harbours all the major organs of the body. Since the air is uniformly distributed in this sky, it is called ‘Samaan’—literally meaning equal and even.]

Since the wind or air present in the sky is all-pervading and all-encompassing, it is called Vyaan (8).

“Canto 3, verse no. 9 = The energetic and dynamic cosmic power called the ‘Tej’ (literally meaning energy, heat, light, radiance, strength, vitality and stamina) that helps the Pran to fly or keep afloat is called Udaan (literally meaning to fly and take off), and it is personified as the vital wind of this name inside the body.

[That is, the Udaan wind personifies the glorious ability of the divine forces of Nature to provide the impetus, the energy, heat, vitality and strength to the entities of creation to lift themselves up from the lower level of existence and reach for higher goals in life. In other words, the Udaan wind is that aspect of the Pran which helps the creature to get up, to wake up and rise, or to lift his self and ‘fly’. All the other vital winds keep on moving and performing their functions because they are empowered and energized by this hidden dynamic force called the Udaan. Since the Sun is a personified form of all the

glorious virtues that the word 'Tej' stands for, such as energy, dynamism, heat, light, strength, vitality, stamina, the Sun is treated as being synonymous with Tej. It is the Sun God that inspires the Pran to do what it does.]

Hence, those persons in whom this Udaan wind dies down, calms down, loses its strength and energy, or gets dissipated, their sense organs do not show life and cannot carry on with their functions. In such a situation, these sense organs retract themselves and collapse into the Mana (the mind). In other words, since the desires of the sense organs are yet unfulfilled because of the inability of these sense organs to act as they had wanted to act due to the dissipation of the Udaan wind, the unrequited desires, aspirations and hopes are ensconced in the Mana or mind, waiting for an opportunity to leap forward and regain lost territory¹.

So, this paves the way for the creature taking a new birth to fulfill his unfulfilled desires, wants, aspirations, hopes and expectations² (9).

[Note--¹The creature has a great desire to do something or achieve some target, but he has lost the energy, the strength, the vitality, the stamina and the ability of the vital winds to inspire and keep the sense organs working so that the aim can be achieved. In such a situation, the desires and aspirations remain unrequited and unfulfilled. In other words, the Mana or the mind continues to harbour these desires, aspirations, wants and yearnings. In fact, the inability to obtain something only goes to stoke the fire of desires more ferociously. They become fierce and stubborn. This compels the creature to continuously think about them while he is still alive, and at the time of death his Atma would yearn to acquire another body so that the unfilled task of the previous life can be completed.

²The concept of what happens after death or the destiny of a person has been explained in many Upanishads. The basic concept is that the creature attains that place which it desires for at the time of death—refer Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 12 which is very explicit on this point. Further, it also depends upon the creature's mental awareness and conception of the what constitutes the 'Truth'—refer Brihad Aranyak Canto 6, Brahman 1, verse no. 1-6.

The destiny of the person depends upon the type of desires he has while doing deeds in this world. This is stated in Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 9-10, 13-16; and in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 33, Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse nos. 4-14.

The concept of death and what happens after that has been succinctly described, inter alia, in the following Upanishads—Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 4/3/33, 35-38, 4/4/1-14, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2, 14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; Taittiriyo-panishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20; Canto 1, Valli 2, verse no. 1-6; Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 6-8; Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 4-17; Subalo-panishad, Canto 11.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1.

The three great Truths to be remembered at the time of death have enunciated in Chandogya Upanishad, 3/17/6. They are—(1) You are eternal and imperishable; (2) You cannot be demoted, degenerate, become fallen and digressed; and (3) You are basically most sublime, subtle, atomic and a microcosmic image of the vast and macrocosmic supreme Brahm.

The metaphor of the tree has been brilliantly employed to explain 'what happens after' death in Brihad Aranyak 3/9/28, and in Chandogya 6/11/1-3.

Why does a creature take a new birth is also explained in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 24.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 10 = The Pran has the energy and the ability to take the creature (i.e. his Atma or soul) into that form which he desires at the time of death in order to fulfill his dreams that are yet unfulfilled¹ (10).

[Note—¹The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse nos. 1-4 very explicitly describes the detailed process by which the Pran leaves the old body and assumes the new body depending upon the desires of the creature.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 12 = A person who gets to understand comprehensibly the five aspects of Pran—viz. the origin, the arrival in this world, the abode or habitat, the distribution in an universal and uniform manner in this world, and the external as well as the internal forms of Pran—verily, such person is indeed able to obtain the exalted stature of eternity and imperishability. This is a certainty (12).”

(14) Atharva Veda’s *Mundak Upanishad*, Canto 3, section 1, verse no. 4—

“[This verse clearly asserts that a truly wise and Brahm realised person is one who continues to do his duties in this world without getting involved in them. This gives him honour and an exalted place amongst those who are called Brahm realised.]

The supreme Brahm is the one who is revealed in the form of Pran or life consciousness in all the living beings¹. A person who knows this universal truth has no sense of Ahankar, or ego and self pride in him. [This is because he realises that whatever the body does is not as a result of his own effort but due to the fact that the Pran that lives in this body is making the body do what the latter does, and this Pran is Brahm personified. So, there is no scope of ‘his’ being proud of anything because ‘he’ is not the doer. ‘He’ is not the one who is empowering the body to do anything, but it is some different mystical power that is known as Brahm that empowers the body.]

Such a wise and erudite person who knows the eclectic truth about the Atma, i.e. about the supreme Brahm residing in his own bosom as the pure consciousness and his true ‘self’, knows that it is this Brahm in the form of the Atma that drives the body and all its activities². It is the Brahm that is the Pran or life consciousness in the body of all living beings.

Such a person is called ‘Brahm realised’. He continues to do his duties in this world and acquires an exalted and honourable position in the society of learned and enlightened men who are categorized as Brahm realised³. (4).

[Note—¹Some of the other Upanishads that affirm that the Pran is a manifestation of Brahm—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse no. 17; Taittiriya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Valli 3, Anuvak 3.

²It is the reason why the Kosha or cell where the Atma lives in the body, i.e. the subtle heart, is called the ‘causal body’ because it is the ‘cause’ of everything in this world. Refer verse no. 9 of Canto 2, section 2 of this Upanishad above.

³That is, a wise person does not run away from the world or from doing his duties, but his attitude changes. Instead of getting neck-deep involved in the deeds and their results, he does them in a dispassionate and detached manner. He does not get hooked to the deeds and their results; he does not bother what the world says or whether or not

success is attained. He does the deeds absolutely dispassionately and in a neutral fashion. This is the eclectic theory of selfless and dispassionate Karma.

This concept of *Karma* or deeds has been explained in a number of Upanishads. For instance, the Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 67 describes succinctly how Karma or deeds and their consequences can be overcome. The Varaaha Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48, and Canto 4, verse no. 35 describe the relationship between the deed, the doer and the cause. The Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60.

The Kathrudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 13 asserts that the supreme transcendental Brahman or the quintessential spiritual Truth of creation as well as Mukti or liberation and deliverance is not possible by merely doing various deeds in this mortal world. This same idea is endorsed in Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 35, which asserts that deeds or Karma do not provide the Atma of the creature with liberation and deliverance from this world, but it is Gyan (truthful knowledge of the spiritual truths) that does so.

The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The Sarwasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds. The Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 67 describes succinctly how Karma or deeds and their consequences can be overcome.]”

(15) Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 10 (that says that Pran controls all the activities of the body); Canto 4, verse nos. 42-43 (that says that the Chitta Vrittis inspire the Prans to become active), 85-89 (that say that control of Pran is equivalent to control of Vasanas, and briefly outline the methods by which Pran can be controlled); Canto 5, verse nos. 25-32, 50-53 (its verse nos. 52-53 aver that for a self-realised ascetic, the terms Pran and consciousness are the same)—

“Canto 4, verse no. 42 = When the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) makes the Pran Vayu (the vital winds) active, life and consciousness begin to flow in the various Naadis (nerves and veins) present in the body of the creature. As a natural corollary it can be said that the cause of the origin of this world and its objects is due to the Chitta having various Vrittis inciting the Pran to become involved in this creation consisting of the gross body as well as the gross world.

[That is, the inherent desires and aspirations of a man motivate him to do so many varying deeds, and since doing of deeds need the active participation of the gross body it is said here that the Naadis have been made active by Pran. The word 'Pran' not only

means vital winds but is also a metaphor for life, activity and movement. Various Upanishads enumerate how the Pran keeps the body active and regulate its functioning. In this context, refer Canto 3, verse no. 10 and its accompanying note.

The life-giving vital winds keep the body alive and active, and such a body is said to be ‘conscious’ of its surroundings as opposed to a body from which the vital winds called Pran have made their exit or in which they have become dormant. An active and living body is said to have consciousness or vital signs of life pulsating in it because of the vital winds flowing through its Naadis; it is this spark of life present in the nerves and veins that keeps the creature alive in this world. This is because the body is made active only when the nerves and veins keep it alive. Since a person who has no desires would not be inclined to do anything in order to fulfill his desires, and therefore his body would not need to remain active, it is said here that Vrittis present in the Chitta incite the Pran to become active, and in turn activate the gross body so that the creature can do what the Chitta wants him to do.] (42).

“Canto 4, verse no. 43 = The Pran (vital winds) is made active, or the vital winds present inside the body begin to vibrate so as to make the body of the creature active and perform various deeds, upon being inspired or incited to be so by the Chitta Vrittis inherent in the creature.

[The mind and the sub-conscious of the creature which makes him do this and that in this world, and his various Vrittis (or natural tendencies, habits, inclinations and temperaments) motivate him to do a particular thing in preference to another. It is the creature’s inherent Vrittis that compel him to swerve towards the material world of sense objects, and thereafter remain hitched to them. Had it not been for these Vrittis of the Chitta, the creature would have been restful, peaceful and calm. The Vrittis keep on gnawing at him and prodding him ceaselessly to do something desired by them. When given a choice, the Vrittis would decide which of the various options the creature selects.

Since all the activities of the body are controlled by the vital winds, it is said that the Chitta Vrittis motivate the Pran to become active and agile. This is because all the desires of the creature as inspired by the Chitta Vrittis can be realised only through the medium of the gross body, and the latter is under the control of the Prans. So unless the Pran works according to the dictates of the Chitta Vrittis, the latter cannot hope to fulfill its desires. (43)

“Canto 4, verse no. 85 = The control of the Pran (vital winds) hold the same importance in acquisition of knowledge of the Tattwa (supreme essence or the Truth known as the consciousness or the Atma or the ‘true self’) as the elimination of the Vasanas. For this, a similar process and attitudes are required.

[Canto 5, verse no. 40 elucidates the direct relationship that exists between the control of the Pran, the Chitta and the Vasanas, along with the importance of such control for the overall spiritual welfare of the spiritual aspirant.]

Hence, those who are wise and learned endeavour to control the mind by controlling the various vital winds called the ‘Prans’. [For this purpose, they follow the various procedures as prescribed in Yoga—such as Pranayam or breath control, Aasans or sitting postures, Bandhas or closures of all openings in the body, etc.] (85).

“Canto 4, verse no. 86 = The Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) becomes quiet, tranquil and rested—i.e. it virtually becomes non-existent or dormant or non-interfering, or ‘A-Chitta’—only when the Vasanas (worldly passions, desires, lust and longings; worldly attachments and attractions) are eliminated. [This is because as long as there are worldly desires, the mind cannot find rest; it would be constantly fidgety and in a state of flux, being buffeted and kept agitated by the pull and tug of the Vasanas.]

Similarly, one can achieve great success in the spiritual field by reining in the vital winds and controlling their movement or vibrations. [It has been said earlier that the Prans control the functioning of the body and its various sense organs. When the Prans are controlled, the body would lose its tendency to be restless, and its sense organs would abandon their natural habit to move towards their respective sense objects in this world. The result would be that the creature would be left alone and at peace with himself. So we see that control of the Vasanas as well as the Pran play equally important role in giving peace and bliss to the spiritual aspirant.] (86).

“Canto 4, verse no. 87 = The movement of the Pran (vital winds) inside the body can be controlled or regulated by practicing Pranayam (breath control), doing various Aasans (sitting postures), and observing Ashan (fasting; moderation in eating), along with establishing a coordination between them as advised by a learned Guru (teacher).

[That is, in order to regulate the movement of Pran it is important to practice all the aforesaid three principles of Yoga simultaneously. They act like the three legs of the tripod which support the aspirant’s efforts to control the Pran and achieve success in his spiritual endeavours. Even if one leg is short or deformed, the tripod would be unsteady and face the risk of toppling over. Similarly, if one any of the three tenets are not properly followed, the aspirant cannot hope for reaching the desired goal of self-realisation.] (87).

“Canto 4, verse no. 88 = Any endeavour that is done alone and without taking any sort of help is said to be ‘A-Sanga’—literally ‘one who has no company’. When anyone achieves success in any given enterprise relying upon his own efforts, he would not be under any obligation of anybody; he would be independent and free from the compulsion to please this or that. Therefore, when one becomes detached from the gross body he would be under no obligations to please the body and its sense organs, and fulfill their demands for gratification. And when extended further, it would also free him from the necessity of appeasing the world by offering the body in its service. Hence, all causes of fears and bondages are automatically done away with (88).

“Canto 4, verse no. 89 = The movement or vibration or pulsation of the Pran (vital winds) inside the body is equivalent to the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) remaining alive, active and agile in the body. [This is obvious because only as long as the body is kept alive by the vital winds would the mind and sub-conscious have any relevance to the creature. A dead body will have the gross aspect of the mind known as the ‘tissue of the brain’ intact, but it would be a lifeless mass of dead tissue, and not a live and vibrant entity known as the ‘brain’ which does stupendous things even without physically appearing to do so or even moving a bit to prove that it is alive and active. A dead body’s

brain-tissue would just be like the rest of the body in which the vital winds have stopped moving.]

Hence, those who are immensely wise and erudite strive and focus their efforts to control their Pran and its movement (by following the instructions given in verse no. 87) in order to control their mind and sub-conscious. (89).

“Canto 5, verse no. 25 = The Pran (life-factors in the creature’s body; literally referring to the vital winds, especially the breath) is an entity that is constantly on the move. It remains perpetually pulsating or vibrating in the creature, and never ceases to move. Indeed, this Pran is dynamism of Brahm revealed in practical terms in the body of a living being; it represents the dynamic energy of Brahm in practice in this life.

This Pran moves in and out of the body, and has a natural tendency of rising high and up. [This observation specifically indicates that the term ‘Pran’ applies to the ‘breath’ because it is the breath that moves in and out of the body, and also has a natural tendency of ‘going up’ through the throat, as well as coming ‘in’ and moving ‘out’ through the nose.] (25).

“Canto 5, verse no. 26 = Similarly, the Apaana Vayu is also a manifestation of the dynamism of Brahm. It too, like the Pran, is constantly on the move, moving in and out of the body. [The term ‘Apaana’ refers to the vital wind that moves down in the body—the wind that moves in the intestines and helps the food to be digested and expelled out of the body; it is mostly located in the lower part of the body below the throat.] (26).

[Note—The Pran wind moves upward and is also located in the upper half of the body, e.g. in the lung and the throat. This is a metaphoric way of saying that there are certain people who are spiritually more elevated and enlightened, people in whom the mind-intellect apparatus is more developed and refined, and who are mentally inclined to look up and positively at this world and life. Such people would be like cream that floats on the surface of milk when it is churned. They are naturally inclined towards nobler and higher goals in life.

On the other hand, the Apaana wind has its dominant presence in the lower half of the body, such as the abdomen and the intestines. This obviously implies a lowly approach to life and its values. The Apaana wind is mainly concerned with digestion and elimination of waste from the body—indicative of the tendency of such people in whom the Apaana wind is more active as being literally indulgent in eating and drinking and making merry while they have the chance to do so! Such people have the habit of developing close relationship with the gross world and are inclined to gratify the demands of their sense organs.

The difference between the approach of the two types of people can be simply described as follows—while the man in whom the ‘Pran’ is more active would be inclined to spend his time and energy in studying the scriptures, seeking company of noble men, discussing spiritual and other eclectic topics, doing noble and righteous deeds, following auspicious path that would give peace to the mind, the heart and the soul, and generally spending their lives in pursuit of positive things, the man in whom the ‘Apaana’ wind is more active would do just the opposite. He would rather spend his time reading books that would have sensual value, do things that would gratify his natural urges and demands of the body, keep company with people who talk of worldly things and material pleasures, spend time in enjoyment of the comforts and pleasures of the world and the body, etc.

Therefore, ‘Pran wind’ would refer to those people who are good, wise, educated, of a high birth and occupy a high standing in society, and are spiritually enlightened, wise and realised, while the ‘Apan wind’ would refer to those persons who are just the opposite.

The dissimilarity between the two situations is marked and obvious. The principle that both the Pran and Apan are manifestations of the same Brahm’s dynamic powers on display would naturally also apply to the two types of people in the world. This is expected in the light of the fact that ‘everything and everyone is Brahm, and nothing but Brahm in this creation’ as affirmed in verse nos. 19-21. And that is why a wise disciple who has fully understood the teachings of the Upanishads treats all living beings alike—refer verse no. 24 above.]

“Canto 5, verse no. 27 = This eclectic way of thinking is the best way of doing Pranayam constantly and consistently, even while one sleeps, from the metaphysical perspective.

Hence, those who know how Pranayam should be done in a holistic and comprehensive manner are duly rewarded by its auspicious and good effects.

[Pranayam is a form of Yoga exercise wherein the practitioner endeavours to control and harness the power of the breath and the other winds present inside the body for achieving his spiritual objectives. The import of this verse is tremendous—if one limits his Pranayam to mere physical exercises that can only be done for a limited time and that only when he is awake, then obviously their good effects would be also limited in scope. But if one develops the holistic and philosophically evolved form of doing Pranayam as described in verse nos. 25-26, then the same can have a profound effect on the spiritual aspirant’s spiritual progress in life. If limited Pranayam can have great practical benefits in the form of good health and rejuvenated spirit, giving peace and bliss to the practitioner, then one can well imagine the heightened benefits if this Pranayam become perpetual and steady. The peace, bliss and tranquility that are derived by this perpetual and steady mode of Pranayam done with acquisition of truthful wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation from the metaphysical perspective would be truly liberating and delivering for the creature.

If physical Pranayam means controlling of the flow of vital winds in the body, then its metaphysical connotation would mean a comprehensive regulation of life in general by the creature. This is because the vital winds control all the functions of the body of the creature. It is also because while physical Pranayam benefits only the gross body which is however inherently perishable and therefore would die one or the other day, thereby limiting the benefits of Pranayam, if the same Pranayam is done in a holistic manner then the entire life of a man undergoes a change for the better, he is able to realise the true potential of his ‘self’ which is however an eternal and imperishable entity. Therefore, it is wiser on his part to spend his time and effort to realise a benefit of doing Pranayam that has an eternal value as compared to a benefit that has a limited life-span and perishable value.] (27).

“Canto 5, verse no. 28 = The Pran extends up to a distance of twelve fingers width outside the body. When the creature’s ‘self’ is able to grasp it and pull it in, then this process is called ‘Purak’. [This refers to the inhalation of breath to fill the body with the air that is present outside it.] (28).

[Note—We see a halo depicted around the head of divine souls or spiritually elevated persons in their portraits. This halo or aura symbolizes the Pran that has been activated

and energized in such people. As has been said in this verse, this energized Pran extends for some distance around their head just like we have an aura around the flame of a lighted candle or the halo around the disc of the sun in the sky. This halo consists of charged particles just like the manner of the charged Pran wind established around the head of spiritual persons.

We have even two forms of electricity—one that moves in the wire, the ‘dynamic electric current’, and the other that is known as ‘static electricity’ which consists of static charged particles in the air immediately around certain things which are dynamic. Likewise, we have two forms of Pran—one that moves in and out of the body, the ‘dynamic Pran’, and the other that is steady around the head of spiritually attained persons, and it is charged with energy that is subtle but visible in the form of the halo or the aura their heads.

In this context, it would be interesting to see what the characters of a spiritually enlightened and self-realised holy man, known as a saint or a Sadhu, are. A true Saint or pious man known as a Sadhu, according to *Adhyatma Ramayan* of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, canto 3, verse no. 37-39, has the following characteristics—

“Those persons who are even-minded and stable, have equanimity and forbearance, are serene, placid, unruffled, unwavering, calm and balanced under adversities as well as favourable circumstances, both during sorrows, sufferings and troubles as well as under happy and joyous situations in this world; those who are without any desires and wants whatsoever; those who do not have any attachment to their worldly assets such as their wealth and sons, nor harbour any desires pertaining to them; those who have restrained, conquered and suppressed their sense organs and their wayward tendencies or the urge for their gratification; those who are of a serene, calm, peaceful and tranquil temperament and mind; those who are sincerely devoted and dedicated to you; those who are devoid of and free from all desires, greed, avarice, yearnings and ambitions of all kinds (37); those who are even-keeled, have equanimity, remain neutral, unaffected, indifferent and aloof even while going through the throes of destruction (unfavourable circumstances) or construction (favourable circumstances); those who are without encumbrances and attachments of any kind; those who abandon and forsake involvement in all types of worldly deeds and getting involved in various actions, i.e. do not regard himself as the ‘doer’ of any deed, nor expects any reward or punishment for it; those who are always the followers of Brahm (i.e. pursue the path of righteousness that leads to the supreme, eternal One) (38); those who are endowed with ‘Yam’ and other virtues (e.g. self-restraint of passions and doing penances and austerities); and those who are contented and satisfied with whatever comes their way—such persons who possess these virtues are truly ‘Sadhus’ (saintly, pious, holy, divine, pure in mind and heart). Whenever one is fortunate to get communion and a chance to interact with such saints, one develops endearment for and interest in your divine stories (i.e. in spiritualism) (39)”.]

“Canto 5, verse no. 29 = Oh Suvrata (i.e. one who has auspicious inclinations and keep auspicious vows; referring to sage Nidagh)! The Moon is represented by the Apaana Vayu, while the Sun is represented by the Pran Vayu. The Apaana wind is present throughout the body, and it virtually reflects the glory and energy of the Pran wind in the body.

[The Apaana wind does not routinely move out of the body like the regular flow of the Pran wind which is also known as the breath. Apaana wind is the general term for the wind that moves in the lower parts of the body, and its general location is in the alimentary canal. While the Pran wind moves out of the body through the nose, the Apaana wind moves out through the anus. It is activated and enabled to carry out its functions—such as digestion and elimination of waste from the body—only as long as

there is 'life' inside the body, and 'Pran' is synonymous with 'life', for if the man stops breathing he would not survive.

This is metaphorically depicted by saying that the Apaana is the Moon while the Pran is the Sun—because the Moon is lighted in the light of the Sun; the Moon shines only because its dark disc is lighted by the sunlight; the Moon would not have shined if there was no Sun. The Moon has no light—or 'life'—of its own, and had there been no Sun the Moon would not have 'lived' as a shining celestial body.

It is the latent heat and dynamism present in the Pran wind that enables the Apaana wind to acquire sufficient heat and energy to keep the body warm, digest the food eaten, and then expel the toxic residue from the body. The inherent heat and warmth in the creature's body is lent by the Pran wind, but carried to the different parts of the body by the way of the nutrients that are extracted by the Apaana wind from the food eaten by the creature.

While the Pran wind makes its presence apparent when one can feel the flow of breath by holding one's hands near the nostrils, or when one speaks because it is the Pran wind that produces sound by rubbing against the vocal cords in the throat, or when breath condenses to form a mist in the front of the head during extreme cold conditions, showing that the creature is alive and has energy and stamina, the Apaana wind on the other hand is hidden inside the body and silently performs all the internal duties assigned to it that actually enables the creature to perform his external duties in the world. The importance of the Apaana wind cannot be underestimated because if it fails to perform its duties properly, the creature would not be able to eat, digest and eliminate waste from the body, and obviously he would fall ill and unable to perform anything in this world. In practice we know how difficult even routine work becomes when one feels gas accumulating inside the abdomen, when one becomes bloated and uncomfortable.

Therefore we conclude that the Pran and the Apaana are but the two sides of the same coin representing the dynamism, the vitality and the life-infusing and life-sustaining virtues of Brahm—one wind is useless or ineffective without the other.] (29).

“Canto 5, verse no. 30 = When the time comes for the Pran Vayu (breath) to subside or become extinct (i.e. when the time of death approaches; when the man's breathing become short, slow and shallow; when 'life' begins to ebb and life-factors become weak and fragile), it appears that numerous Apaana Vayus (the wind present in the abdominal region) have made their appearance. [This is due to the slowing down of the overall functioning of the body, resulting in the incarceration of vital winds due to reduced metabolism and the inability to properly digest the ingested food. This results in accumulation of gases inside the body which reveal themselves as bloating, rumbling, gurgling, croaking of wind etc. in the abdominal cavity. There is a constant heaviness in the lower abdomen and in the intestines, and a constant desire to pass flatus as well as to belch. Such a man would take medicines in order to suppress the restlessness of the Apaana wind, forgetting that this restlessness is an indication that the Atma wishes to leave the gross body which has become feeble and decrepit. He wishes to cling to this body for as long as he can.]

When the Pran and Apaana Vayus are united with each other, or when they mix and become one (as is done during Yoga), the man is able to experience the consciousness inside him. He realises that the moribund and perishable gross body must

be forsaken, and it is better to shed it voluntarily and peacefully rather than cling to its grossness for much longer because it will cause agony, pain and misery for the soul.

[A careful reading of these two stanzas would clear the difference in their meaning. The first stanza refers to a man who does not practice Yoga—so when his old age approaches, he is tormented by weak wind. His breathing slows down, and there is accumulation of gases in the body which give him a lot of discomfort. He does not want to leave the body, and takes medicines to overcome ‘gases’, but does not recognize this symptom as the desire of the Atma to leave the cage of the gross body.

On the other hand, the second stanza refers to a man who practices Yoga or meditation regularly. He has accustomed his body to slow down the movement of the Pran wind by practicing Pranayam (a technique of Yoga by which breath is controlled), and has also sufficiently energized his Apaana wind that it can rise up and mix with the Pran wind to reach up in the region of the head, at which time the practitioner experiences the thrill of self-realisation, and when this exercise is extended further the practitioner is able to voluntarily make his Pran-Apaana winds to make their exit through from the body by sneaking out through the skull by the path of the Brahma-Randhra which is a hair-like slit in the cranium bone. This results in his Mukti—or liberation and deliverance from the shackles represented by the gross physical body. Once outside, the Pran merges with the cosmic air or wind element present outside the body, and becomes one with it. In other words, the individual’s Pran or vital life-sustaining winds have discarded their earlier limited realm and scope to become universal and all-pervading like the wind or the air that is present in the sky outside the gross body.

In this scenario, the first type of person has to suffer numerous types of discomfort of the body and is utterly uneasy because the same Pran-Apaana complex, which is the basis of life in his body, now begins to torment him no end, while the second person is at peace with himself as he has obtained full control over the same Pran-Apaana complex by establishing a harmony between them, and therefore leaves the body comfortably and voluntarily.

There is another angle from which one can interpret this verse. The Pran wind stands for the Sun which symbolizes the light of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and self-realisation that a creature has. The Apaana wind stands for the Moon which symbolizes the heart and its emotional and sentimental aspects in a creature. Now, if the Pran is the dominant wind, then the person would be naturally inclined to be spiritually elevated and attracted towards nobler and sublime values and things in life. He would be driven by the thoughtful, analytical, rational and discriminating mind and intellect apparatus, and hence his life and its decisions would be well-thought after and balanced. On the other hand, a man in whom the Apaana wind is playing the decisive role would be driven by the heart, and obviously would be more impulsive, emotional and sentimental in whatever he does, thinks etc.

Again, a person in whom the Pran is more active would spend his time and life in pursuit of noble goals in life, while he in whom the Apaana is more agile would be indulgent in the world and a serf of the body.

Evidently thus, a person who has not fully controlled these two winds would be like a leaf tossed around in a storm, while he who has overcome the natural inclinations of the winds would be settled and calmed. The former sort of person would be torn between numerous opposing demands, habits, inclinations and tendencies of the body, the

mind and the heart. He would be tossed and kicked around like a balloon or a ball. The Pran wind would pull him upwards, and the Apaana wind would try to pull him down.

The only way out of this predicament and spiritual dilemma is to create a balance and establish a harmony between the opposite pulls of the two important winds inside the body. Success in it would bestow the reward of rest, peace, calmness and tranquility. This success is achieved by practicing Pranayama. It not only helps to create a balance between these two vital winds but also harnesses their combined energy for the long term physical as well as spiritual well-being of the practitioner. The vibrations of the two winds now coalesce with each other to produce enhanced energy and dynamism, instead of working against each other and clashing with one another to cause upheaval and unnecessary discomfort for the Jiva.

The effect is magical to say the least—because the vibrations that had previously caused havoc for the creature now aid in his all round welfare and well-being. Instead of causing so much agony and torments for him, the two winds now make his life easy and comfortable. Their combined energy is able to lift him from having to live a humdrum life of misery, pain, uneasiness and shortages to a healthy life of peace, bliss and contentedness. He is catapulted from a lowly life of grossness to an exalted life of sublimity and holiness.

Its like two powerful kings joining hands for the general welfare of their kingdoms and subjects—then instead of constant skirmishes and warfare leading to ruin, havoc and enmity all around, there is now eternal peace, contentedness, development, growth, happiness and cheer everywhere.] (30).

“Canto 5, verse no. 31 = In a gross body where the Apaana wind completely calms down or subsides and stops its natural activities, there is not the slightest chance of the Pran wind ever making its appearance again. [When the Apaana wind becomes extinct, all the organs stop functioning and the body is deprived of nutrients. Naturally, the body cannot survive in this condition. This is indicated metaphorically by saying that the Pran wind that symbolizes life cannot make its appearance if the Apaana wind dies.]

Therefore, you (Nidagha) should take the shelter of the pure consciousness known as the Atma which is eternally steady, independent, self-reliant, self-sustaining, unmoving and uniform unlike the two winds. One who is wise would always prefer to accept something having eternal value and sovereign rather than something that is changeable and dependent upon something else.

[The vital winds known as Pran and Apaana infuse and control life in the gross body of a living being like the consciousness known as the Atma. But there is a vital difference between them—whereas the two winds are dependent upon each other for their survival, the Atma is independent, self-sustaining and self-sufficient. The two winds cannot stand alone by themselves—the Pran wind infuses life in the body by way of breath, and only as long as the body lives is the Apaana wind able to carry out its functions of digestion, extraction and distribution of nutrients, and expulsion of waste from the body. Similarly, it is only as long as the Apaana wind functions properly that the body is kept healthy and survive, for otherwise the body would bloat, breathing would be difficult, the body would be poisoned by accumulation of toxic matter inside it, and the person would die. In other words, the mere presence of the Pran wind or the Apaana wind would not be able to help the body survive and enable the creature to live a comfortable

and healthy life if both of them do not coordinate their activities or work against each other.

On the other hand, the Atma does not depend on any other entity for its survival. Even if the present body dies, the Atma continues to live, because it is an ethereal Spirit that was trapped inside the former body and when the body dies this Spirit is freed from its prison. If the Atma does not make a body alive by injecting consciousness in it, the vital winds would not be able to do so. If the Atma leaves the body, the vital winds would not be able to keep the body alive on their own.

Besides this, a time comes when the two winds begin to give trouble to the creature as is clear from verse nos. 25-31. A wise man would wonder why any entity that is supposed to provide 'life' would ever give him trouble, and why would an entity that is supposed to be infinite ever subside and become extinct? Therefore he concludes that to treat the vital winds as the source of eternal and imperishable 'life' is an erroneous, a fallacious, a misconceived and a misplaced proposition. He also concludes that therefore there must be something else that is really responsible for the factor of 'life' in this creation. So he begins his search for this source of life, and upon research and study of the Upanishads he discovers that this true quintessential entity that is synonymous with life is known as the pure conscious Atma.

In other words, he deduces that the truthful factor that infuses real 'life' into the gross body is not the 'Pran' or the 'Apan' but the 'Consciousness' that is known as the Atma. This Atma is eternal, imperishable and infinite; it never undergoes change as it is steady and constant unlike the two winds known as Pran and Apan. Hence, if he takes the shelter of this Atma, the pure consciousness, then surely he is bound to be free from the torments and fears presented by relying upon the vital winds for his life-sustenance. If he relies on the Pran and the Apan to attain an eternal life, he would be cheating himself because sooner or later these two winds would become feeble by age, they would lose their energy and vitality as the body ages and begins to decay, and they would finally betray him by subsiding and resulting in life being snuffed out of the body. On the contrary, if he relies upon the Atma as a source of life, then he succeeds in his quest for obtaining an eternal source of life because the Atma is eternal and imperishable.

Whereas the presence and life-giving dynamism of the Pran and the Apan is proved only when one breathes through the Pran and when the body carries out its varied functions, digestion being one of them, through the Apan, the presence and dynamism of the Atma is known even without any vivid signs or perceptible symptoms. That is, the presence of Pran is known when one breaths or speaks, and as soon as the man stops breathing or speaking it is deemed that the Pran has left the body. Similarly, the presence of Apan is known when the food is digested, the waste eliminated, the body gets proper nourishment, and kept warm. But the presence of the consciousness does not require such signs. Acclaimed ascetics are known to hold the movement of their vital winds for prolonged periods of time by various meditative techniques, but that does not mean that they are 'dead'.

From the metaphysical perspective this verse means that a wise, enlightened and self-realised person must understand that the vital wind can, and eventually would, come to an end, but the 'consciousness' is an eternal entity. And therefore, it is wise for him to treat the consciousness as his 'life' rather than the vital winds.

Therefore, if a wise man is given a choice to choose a synonym for 'life' between the two options of 'Pran-Apaan complex' and 'consciousness known as the Atma', he would certainly choose the latter.] (31).

"Canto 5, verse no. 32 = You must strive to experience the presence of pure consciousness which is done (during the process of Yoga) when the Apaan wind is active but the Pran wind has stopped its movement. At this point of time, the practitioner of Yoga focuses his attention at the tip of his nose in order to concentrate his mind upon the consciousness¹. [This refers to the process of Pranayam when the flow of Pran (breath) is controlled, but the Apaan wind continuous with its routine activity.] (32).

"Canto 5, verse no. 50 = Those great ascetics who have successfully controlled their various vital winds by diligently following the principles of Yoga (meditation), and have consequentially attained the high stature of self-realisation when they have experienced the glory and radiance of the consciousness residing inside their own self as their Atma—such ascetics become free from all diseases (both physical as well as spiritual), and attain a divine state of being (existence) which has no beginning or end (because they would have activated their dormant cosmic energy and shifted the focus of their identity from being that of the gross and perishable body that has a limit scope, to that of the Atma which is subtle, sublime, eternal, infinite and imperishable).

Such realised and acclaimed ascetics are renowned as being those who are truly expert in the knowledge of the Sankhya Shastra, as those who have truthfully understood the meaning of this school of Indian philosophy (50).

"Canto 5, verse no. 51 = The spiritually exalted and eclectic state of sublime existence marked by natural and inherent virtues of exemplary peace, tranquility, serenity, bliss, beatitude and felicity is the one that should be the aim of all spiritual aspirants.

The only way of controlling the restless, vagrant and wayward tendency of the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) is to exercise diligent control or restraint over the Prans (vital winds) with a singular aim of containing the Chitta.

[That is, if one wishes to exercise restraint over his mind and contain its inherent restiveness, he should learn to practice the various methods by which the movement of the vital winds can be controlled. This implies, inter alia, practicing Pranayam and other methods prescribed according to the principles of Yoga. Its metaphysical connotation is that the aspirant should control the urges of the body and its sense organs to seek gratification, to run behind their respective sense objects in the material world in the hope of finding happiness, joy, comfort, pleasure, satisfaction and bliss in them, and to allow one become a surf to one's inherent Vasanas (passions etc.), Vrittis (inherent and natural tendencies etc.), Sankalps (determinations, ambitions, volitions etc.), Kamnas (hopes, desires etc.) and all such natural inclinations of a man that are part and parcel of life in this mundane gross existence.

These natural tendencies of the man would compel his mind to instruct the body to take necessary steps in order to satisfy them. This is metaphorically indicated in the Prans being restless and active as all the functions and activities of the body are governed and controlled by different vital winds which are collectively called Pran. If the Pran is controlled, the activities of the body would be automatically controlled. If the body is

controlled, the mind would not be disturbed by the constant flow of information from the gross external world which the organs of perception in the body collect and continuously pass on to the mind. In this context, refer to Canto 3, verse no. 10 and its accompanying note, and Canto 5, verse no. 41.

Obviously, when one frees one's self from these fetters that shackle the Spirit to the gross world can he ever expect to find peace and rest of the mind. And unless the mind is rested and quiet the sub-conscious cannot find rest simply because the latter acts as a store-house of information collected by the active mind for future referral and advice, and till the time the mind does not stop collecting inputs from the external world the sub-conscious cannot find rest. It's like the relationship between the boss and his secretary—the mind being the boss and the sub-conscious being the secretary.] (51).

“Canto 5, verse no. 52 = When one high goal which is the chief aim of one's efforts is accomplished, all the rest of the milestones and subsidiary goals that come in the way of reaching this destination are deemed to have been successfully crossed or attained or accomplished.

[When one has accomplished success, say for instance, in reaching the state of Samadhi, or in obtaining the state of Turiya which is the fourth and transcendental state of existence of consciousness, then obviously other stages that come before these must have been passed successfully before one reaches this destination. Another more worldly example is this—if one has passed his post-graduate examination and successfully obtained his M.A. degree, it is natural to deduce that he must have already passed his under-graduate examination and must have acquired the B.A. degree. There is no doubt in it.

So, if one has become successful in controlling the Chitta, it follows that he must have successfully controlled the Prans as well as other factors such as the various Vasanas, Vrittis, Sankalps etc. which act as metaphoric milestones on the way up. If they are not crossed or literally vanquished, it is not possible to reach the eclectic goal of controlling the Chitta.

Similarly, the control of the Pran necessitates the control and regularization of the Chitta, because a wayward and restless mind would never allow the creature to ever rest in peace, and a restless creature is one whose sense organs are fidgety and ever desirous for self-gratification depending upon the intensity and measure of the Vasanas, Vrittis and Sankalps that he harbours. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 40-49 in this context.]

Thus, achievement of the eclectic spiritual goal of self-realisation, Brahm-realisation, and of finding spiritual peace, eternity, beatitude and blissfulness is possible only by a coordinated effort to successfully overcoming all the intervening hurdles, and obtaining success in mastering the art of having complete control over all other factors that act as symbolic milestones en-route to the averred spiritual goal.]

When one has reached the highest state of spiritual realisation when he is neutral to the gross external world and the gross body, his Pran (life-factors present in the body and represented by the vital winds) and Chetna (consciousness) both become unified and one¹. [When a spiritual aspirant has reached the higher state of self-realisation, there is no difference between his vital winds and his consciousness. Both flow together in the various Naadis or nerves and veins in the body. That is why it is said in the Yoga Upanishads, while describing the process of Kundalini activation and diverting the Pran

in to the Sushumna Naadi, that when the Pran reaches the top of the head the ascetic experiences the thrill and ecstasy that comes with witnessing the presence of supreme ‘consciousness’ inside him, and that when his Pran makes its exit out of the body by escaping through the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit in the cranium, the ascetic ‘himself’ is deemed to have left the gross body—this is because his ‘consciousness’ that is known as the Atma and the truthful ‘self’ of the ascetic has left the gross body in the guise of his subtle spark of life known as the Pran!] (52).

“Canto 5, verse no. 53 = Both these two entities—i.e. the Pran (vital winds that infuse life into the body of a creature) and the consciousness (known as the Atma and the truthful ‘self’)—are interdependent. One is the basis of the other. If one decays or comes to ruin, the other would follow suit.

[This is clear by simple logic. The vital winds keep the body alive, active, healthy and vibrant. They help in imbibing food and drink; they help in digestion, extraction of various nutrients from the food and drink imbibed, and their proper distribution to all the corners of the body uniformly so that each pore of the body is nourished. They help in the elimination of waste; they help in regulating circulation and other functions of the internal organs of the body, they help the body to remain robust and strong, they maintain pressure inside the body and give it its shape and contour. In short, the health, strength, energy, vitality, vigour and the overall functioning of the body have a direct relation to the vital winds.

If, say, the Apaana wind becomes feeble or refuses to carry out its designated functions properly, the food would not be digested, the nutrients would not be extracted, and the waste would accumulate inside the body. In other words, if the Prans become weak the ‘ascetic’ too becomes weak because the body becomes weak, and since the truthful identity or the ‘self’ of the ascetic is the ‘pure consciousness’ known as the Atma, it follows that the ‘consciousness’ too is subjected to miseries when the Pran becomes weak. This is because the Atma lives inside the body, and when the latter is subjected to miseries it is natural that the resident Atma would also suffer.

The role of the ‘consciousness’ is equally important for the ‘life’—literally called the ‘Pran’—of a creature. The term ‘consciousness’ is a synonym for life—when one organ is paralyzed, we say that it has lost its ‘consciousness’, that it is not conscious, and that it is therefore ‘dead’ though the vital winds may be functioning properly. Further, Yoga Upanishads describe how the ascetic is able to divert his vital winds into the Sushumna Naadi (the main duct running through the spinal cord) and enables them to reach the top of the head from where they exit out of the body through the Brahm-Randhra, thereby providing ‘Mukti’ of liberation and deliverance to the ‘ascetic’ from the shackles of the gross body. The ‘ascetic’ here is obviously the ‘Atma’ because the latter is the true ‘self’ of any living being, and not the vital winds collectively known as the Pran.

The Atma and Pran share certain virtues that are common to them both—as for instance they are both all-pervading, all-encompassing, infinite, omnipresent, immanent, immutable, form-less, invisible, uniform, universal, and ethereal cosmic entities. As far as sustenance of life in this creation is concerned, they are both equally important and necessary. In this aspect they share a symbiotic relationship with each other. Rather, they are, for all practical purposes, synonymous with each other—for when we talk about life

we imply both the Pran as well as the Atma. Life cannot be imagined in its full and truly vibrant form if we exclude any one of these two eclectic entities from its meaning.

But if one were to decide which of the two is superior, then the unequivocal answer would be—it is ‘the Atma’.

It is just like giving two names to the same entity depending upon the situation and usage. So, if the ‘consciousness’ becomes weak, or when the ascetic has not realised his true ‘self’ and able to practices self-control over his senses, the Prans too become weak by remaining out of control and wasting their energy in senseless indulgences and worthless pursuit of the world by instigating the body to be involved in the myriad activities of the material world. Likewise, when the Pran becomes weak, the soul is subjected to immense sufferings because the body in which the soul lives suffers when the Prans are not able to sustain and support it properly.]

Thus, a wise and self-realised enlightened ascetic understands that his Mukti (spiritual liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation) depends upon establishing a synergy and coordination between the two—the Pran (vital winds) and the Chetna (consciousness) that are present inside his body. This is main objective of Yoga—to establish a harmony between these two quintessential units of the body of a living being (53).”

(16) Atharva Veda’s *Atma Upanishad*, verse no. 18 (says that the body is kept active by the vital winds)—

“This gross body of the creature is moved here and there and kept active by the vital winds present inside the body, winds which are collectively known as Pran, just like pieces of wood floating on rivers and waterfalls are made to wobble, bob, toss, tumble, flop-flop, flick and dance around by the swift currents of water in these rivers and waterfalls (18).”

(17) Atharva Veda’s *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 2 (the 4 aspects of Pran; that Pran moves through four Naadis)—

“[The sage narrates how the Pran, literally meaning vital factor of life that is a synonym of the consciousness present inside the body of all living beings, and which represents the supreme cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, moves inside the body of the creature to keep the latter alive and active. Intertwined in this discussion are the various states of existence of the consciousness. It is then outlined how the Jiva, the living being who personifies Brahm, is able to attain Brahm-hood by following the 8-fold path of Yoga.]

The Pran, the life-bearing vital wind or air that sustains life in the body of the living being known as the Jiva, is regarded as being synonymous with ‘consciousness’. This ‘consciousness’ is a universal constant factor of the living creation, an entity or factor without which there would be no existence of life.

This Pran moves in the body of the creature through the four chief Naadis (literally tubular ducts in the body through which life or consciousness flows inside the

body of the creature). These Naadis are four in number and have the following names—Rama, Arama, Ichha, and Purnarbhava.

When the Pran gets tired or weary of wandering between the Rama and Arama Naadis during the two states of existence of the creature, such as the Jagrat or the waking state and the Swapna or the dreaming state respectively, tired like a kite or an eagle flying high in the sky, it (the Pran, the consciousness) wants to take rest. For this, the Pran enters the Sushupta or deep sleep state (which comes after the dreaming state is crossed, and is the state of existence when the Pran need not bother about moving anywhere, but rest blissfully).

The Pran, which is a personified form of the divine Lord (because it infuses life and consciousness into the otherwise lifeless, inert and inane gross body) moves unhindered in the body of the living being through the medium (channel; route) of the three Naadis representing the three states of existence of consciousness. [These three states are Jagrat or waking, Swapna or dreaming, and Sushupta or deep sleep states respectively.^{1]}

The Pran or life consciousness moves (pervades; pulsates) throughout the brightly illuminated sky ('Hiranya-maye Para-kash') represented by the inner-self of the creature like the eagle or kite flying in the sky that is brightly lit during the daytime.

[The creature is compared to the kite that leaves its perch on the ground and flies high in the sky brightly lit during the daytime. By evening or sunset it gets tired and comes back to its nest to rest. The Pran or the consciousness remains active in the world during the waking state which is the gross level of existence and corresponds to the kite remaining close to the ground. Then the Pran begins to imagine things just like a man sees dreams. Even during dreams the Pran or the consciousness cannot find rest because it is as active as it was during the actual involvement in the world during the waking state. The only difference is that now, during the dreaming state, this involvement is at the subtle level of existence. This second state of dreams is compared to the kite flying high in the sky, because now the kite has left the gross physical surface of the earth and reached the subtle world of the sky, the sky which is illuminated by the rays of the sun. Obviously, the vision the kite gets from a high level in the sky would be broader and vast as compared to the limited area it could see when nearer to the surface of the earth. So, when the consciousness begins to dream, it conjures up a vastly fascinating world which is widely different from the reality of existence.

But none of these two states give the Jiva, the living being represented by the Pran or the consciousness present inside his body, the rest and peace that he desires to have. Therefore he moves to the third state of existence called the deep sleep state or the Sushupta state.

[Previously only two Naadis, i.e. the Rama and the Arama, were mentioned through which the Pran moved in the body. Now, the third Naadi named 'Ichha' is cited. It is through this Naadi that the Pran moves to the third state of Sushupta which is the state of deep sleep. The word 'Ichha' literally means to have a wish or desire. Hence, when the Pran 'wishes or desires' to rest, it moves through this Ichha Naadi.]

When the Pran (consciousness; the subtle 'living' dimension of the creature) enters this third state of existence known as the Sushupta, it finds rest and peace, which incidentally is its natural state. Hence, it is deemed to have attained its primary form—of being at complete rest, peace, serenity and tranquility; of being fully blissful.

These three stages of the Pran (life and consciousness) are representative of the three aspects of Brahm, called the 'Tripaad Brahm'. [This is because of two reasons—(i) all living beings pass through these three stages in life, i.e. they wake up, they dream, and they sleep soundly, and (ii) the fact that all living beings are visible images of the invisible Brahm. So the three stages of the living world are three dimensions of existence of Brahm for all practical purposes.]

In spite of flying high in the illuminated sky, the creature continues to fall and get trapped in the valley represented by these three stages. [The word 'creature' here refers to the Atma because it represents the living being's true self, and the 'illuminated sky' refers to the inherent wisdom that the Atma possesses. The 'falling from the sky' is a figure of speech to indicate demotion of the Atma from its exalted stature to that of creature ensnared in the affairs of the world and tied in fetters to the shackles of the mundane world consisting of a cycle of birth and death. It refers to the instance of the high-flying bird who can easily avoid getting trapped by a bird-catcher's net if it is not tempted by greed and overcome by ignorance, for then it voluntarily gets ensnared. The bird is greedy to eat the bait, and it is unaware that this bait is laid out to catch it rather than to feed it. Say then, who is to blame for the bird's ill-fate and precarious condition except the bird itself? Similarly, who is to be blamed for the creature getting trapped in the world other than the creature himself?]

Just like a man named Devdutta who is beaten by a stick and wounded while he was asleep gets so terrified at the prospect of going back to sleep again after he wakes up, a wise man who is 'awakened' or enlightened about the truth of existence, about the truth of the world (that it is false and ensnaring for the soul), and the truth about his own self (that it is eternally free and the quintessential consciousness known as the Atma which trapped in the gross body and unnecessarily suffering due to its ignorance) by means of studying of the scriptures or when taught by the Guru (spiritual advisor), he too would shun falling in the trap of this gross world and its equally gross mundane life characterized by the three states of existence in which the Pran (consciousness) oscillates as narrated above.

[Devdutta is an imaginary man who is beaten while asleep. The pain is so great that when he wakes up he becomes paranoid of sleep, and would be terrified at the prospect of falling asleep lest he would be subjected to more beating by his enemies. Similarly, a wise man who comes to realise that all the sufferings he is being subjected to in this world are his own making, and the cause is that he has forgotten about the exalted nature of his 'self' known as the Atma which is nothing but pure consciousness and eternally free and blissful, and has instead treated the gross body as his identity. Once he has become enlightened about the reality of his Atma and the falsehood of the world, he would certainly not do anything that would result in the Atma getting trapped in the snare of delusions that are so characteristic of this world. He would be terrified by the thought of taking birth in this world again because he has closely experienced the horrors of this world during his current life. So he would endeavour to do anything he can to ensure that he would not have to come back again. In other words, he would strive to obtain his final Mukti or Moksha, meaning attaining spiritual liberation and deliverance or spiritual emancipation and salvation. Like the man called Devdutta, he would be paranoid of this world and terrified of the prospects of getting involved in its affairs.]

Therefore, such an awakened and enlightened man would not allow himself to get trapped in the cycle of deeds and their consequences. He would shun doing either auspicious deeds or inauspicious deeds; he would keep a safe distance from both doing good deeds or bad deeds in order to achieve any worldly objectives because he knows that each deed would produce its own effects, and once he allows himself to fall prey to the temptation of doing certain deed to obtain certain objective he would be sucked in the vortex of deeds and consequences from which it would be almost impossible to extricate later on.

He knows that doing deeds with emotional involvement in them and with expectation of results from these deeds would be a sufficient ground to automatically trap him in the world from where it would be difficult for him to retrieve himself later on. So he maintains his dispassionate and detached attitude even if he is bound to do anything in this world due to exigencies of life. In other words, he does not allow his Atma to get involved in the deeds done by his body. This is practically possible if he does not allow his mind and heart to be involved in the deeds done by the body—i.e. if he does deeds dispassionately, with total detachment, and without expecting any rewards or results from doing deeds. He does them as and when they come along.

[Earlier in this verse, the example of the bird flying high is cited. This bird either gets tired by continuous flying during the day in search of prey, swooping down on it when sighted, and running away from its enemies in hot pursuit, or it gets trapped by the bird-catcher's net in its greed for the bait laid by the cunning bird-catcher. On the other hand, had the bird not wished to catch a prey, or had it remained contented with whatever it had, it would have remained calmly gliding in the sky and returned to its nest at the end of the day instead of getting tired by endlessly pursuing its prey or dodging its enemies, or getting trapped by the bird-catcher's snare. Likewise, a wise man who remains contented and fulfilled is always at peace with himself. He accepts whatever comes his way; he does deeds according to the necessities and exigencies of circumstances without getting unduly perturbed or agitated about the deed and its result.]

Such a wise and enlightened man finds comfort, happiness, peace and contentedness in any situation he lives in just like an innocent child who feels comfortable and happy in any toy it finds to play with without having preference for any particular thing.

[He is not perturbed and affected at all by the troubles and tribulations of the physical world which he faces and interacts with during his waking state. He is not at all concerned with what he imagines in his dreams; he does not wish that what he sees in his dreams impact his waking life. And of course he remains peaceful like one sleeping soundly during the deep sleep state. In other words, his composure and poise is perpetual and steady.]

A wise, enlightened and self-realised spiritual aspirant realises the divine nature of his truthful 'self' known as the Atma—that it is a fount and an embodiment of spiritual illumination and bliss, that it is as radiant and splendorous as the brilliant rays of the bright sun shining in the otherwise dark sky—when he is enlightened about it by the teaching of his moral preceptor and teacher (known as the Guru) as well as by the study of the scriptures. With this knowledge, he is able to attain the citadel of bliss, felicity and beatitude. In other words, he becomes aware of the exalted stature of his 'true self' known as the Atma; he realises that his Atma is a personification of the supreme Atma

known as Brahm, the Atma that is as brilliant and splendid as the celestial sun; he realises that this Atma is free from the countless blights and blemishes that are hallmarks of everything else in this gross creation. He discovers to his extreme delight that the genes of divinity and holiness are running through his system, and that he is no ordinary mortal creature squirming in misery and filth, but is an exalted being who is eternal, graceful and divine. He therefore has nothing more to achieve or claim.

He thus exults at this grand discovery of his own 'self', and with it he begins to radiate a divine spiritual halo that resembles the shine of the sun in the sky. He is so exhilarated and ecstatic that he indeed becomes a personification of eternal bliss that characterizes the Atma. Such a person is deemed to have realised the Parmatma, the supreme Atma known as Brahm, and he feels ever contented in the supreme bliss that this realisation brings to him as he understands that his own Atma is the supreme transcendental Brahm present in his inner-being as his 'true self'.

Auspiciousness and divinity are the characteristic virtues of Ishwar, the Supreme Being, and when this Ishwar is revealed inside one's own being, his own inner-self, it is obvious and natural that corresponding virtues of greatness, grandness, divinity, holiness and sublimity sprout in the inner-self of the realised person. This makes his Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) extremely happy and ever contented. When this state of enlightenment is experienced by him, he relishes it, he enjoys it, he exults in it, and he remains steady in it. He literally wishes to remain cocooned in the shell of bliss and contentedness that comes with self-realisation (much like an oyster that lives peacefully within its shell).

It is like the case of a man tired of the toil and torments of this physical world of his waking state going to sleep and seeing a pleasant dream where he lives a life of happiness and bliss. He would prefer to remain dreaming rather than waking up to the harsh realities of a world ridden with uncountable miseries and grief. So, when a person realises the truth of his 'self' which is blissful and contented, and which is equivalent to the state in which Brahm exists, he experiences the bliss that comes with knowing the Atma. He then realises the futility of his engagement in the world, doing various deeds and pursuing their results which snatch him of his peace, serenity and tranquility.

Even as a caterpillar easily migrates from one twig to another, a wise man easily transmits his inner-self from the symbolic physical state of existence in this gross material world where he is surrounded and tormented by its inherent miseries and problems to the symbolic world of dreams which give him peace and rest. That is, though outwardly he may be living in the world and going about his routine life in an ordinary way, internally he remains aloof and distanced from everything surrounding him in this physical world. Thus he gets internal peace and stability in spite of being surrounded by tribulations and upheaval of the world that are marked by miseries and instability.

He acquires the ability to live in any state he wishes, whether it is the Jagrat, the Swapana or the Sushupta state. In other words, he can live in this world, he can dream and still remain wise, enlightened and fully self-realised. He is deemed to have mastered the art of Samadhi in a holistic manner. During this state of Samadhi, a man may be physically wide awake but he is as good as sleeping soundly in as much as he registers nothing of the gross and physical world in which he lives.

[Samadhi is a spiritual state of transcendental bliss obtained when one has accessed the super-consciousness. It is a trance-like state when the person is unaware of

the surrounding world. He might be wide awake in the physical world at the physical plane of existence, but internally he is lost in deep meditation and contemplation. He might go about his daily routine but remains lost in his thoughts. It is not a mental disorder but a state of transcendental existence of consciousness.]

In this way, his own 'self' becomes one with the supreme 'Self'; his Atma becomes one with the Parmatma or Brahm. Or it can be said that his Atma becomes a personification of Brahm. Such a wise and enlightened man does not have to abandon his body to realise Brahm—Brahm rather lives in him; he becomes an image of the blissful and peaceful transcendental Brahm.

Now, if one is not able to attain this eclectic state of existence that makes him self and Brahm realised, that makes him experience the Atma and Brahm and their attendant bliss and peace first hand by listening to and studying of the scriptures alone, and is unable to find his final Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance), then he should take the help of Yoga with its eight branches or limbs. This is known as 'Kapaal-ashtak' process because it involves practicing all the eight steps of Yoga (meditation) in order to make his Pran (vital wind or air) rise up to his skull where he experiences extreme thrill and ecstasy, and finally escaping of this Pran through the Brahm-Randhra, which is the hair-like slit in the cranium, into the outer atmosphere to provide the practitioner of Yoga his final Mukti from the bondage of the physical gross body.

[The eight-fold path of Yoga, or the eight steps of doing Yoga comprehensively are the following—Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, Dhyana and Samadhi².]

They should be employed to wash off all the taints and impurities of the inner-self and attain the knowledge of Brahm. The Atma lives in a docile, humble, inactive, un-awakened and un-aroused form in the subtle heart of the creature like an undeveloped, flacid or withered breast, and it is rejuvenated and awakened during the practice of the Kapaal-ashtak Yoga like a fully developed, fleshy, rounded and robust breast. It then rises up and blooms like the flower of the plantain tree. It is the path that leads to the auspicious Ishwar or the Lord known as Brahm. That is, it is the path that leads to self-realisation and experiencing of the cosmic Consciousness with its magnificent glories and extreme bliss in the inner-self of the aspirant. It is also called Indra Yoni or Veda Yoni.

[The Atma is called 'Indra Yoni' because it is the Atma that inspires and motivates the organs of the body of the creature to act and do things in this world. It is the Atma that harbours the desire to do deeds and then get involved doing them and enjoying their results. This is why it is called the 'yoni' or the womb. Should the Atma decide that it does not want to get involved in the world, it would not inspire the organs of the body, called the 'Indris', to get involved in the world and its activities.

It is also called the 'Veda Yoni' as it is the Atma that inspires one to follow the path laid down by the scriptures known as the Vedas.]

In the aforesaid manner, one who contemplates and meditates upon the Ishwar in his lotus-like heart rises above the mundane considerations of one thing being auspicious, righteous, noble and good, and the other not being so. He never gets entangled in any kind of deeds, whether they are auspicious, noble and holy, or are not so.

[A spiritually enlightened and wise person remains dispassionate towards all kinds of deeds and their results. He becomes an epitome of the virtues of equanimity, neutrality and detachment. Even while he appears to be doing some deed in the physical

world, his internal 'self' known as the Atma is absolutely unconcerned by what the gross body of his does.]

Who is that Ishwar who lives in the lotus-like heart? Well, he is the one who bestows all the other Gods with their happiness and joys. He lives in the inner-self of all living beings, and therefore knows everything, including the hidden thoughts, emotions, ideas and intentions of all. He is all alone; he is serene; he does not have company; he does not take sides; he is unpartisan and aloof. He is a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness. He is the primal Purush, the Viraat Purush who is the all-pervading and invisible almighty macrocosmic Lord from whom the creation is revealed.

He is the supreme transcendental Brahm that is known as 'Pranav Hans'—i.e. he is represented by the cosmic ethereal Consciousness known as Pranav, as well as by the divine bird Swan which is regarded as an epitome of purity and wisdom. But he is not the 'Pran Hans'—i.e. he is not the divine Swan that is used as a metaphor for the Prans known as the vital winds or airs present in their physical dimension inside the body of the creature in the form of breath and other winds that flow inside the physical gross body and keep it alive. [In other words, Brahm is the pure cosmic Consciousness that is much higher in stature than the vital airs known as Pran which infuse and sustain life in this creation, though this Consciousness is also responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the creation. The vital winds would not be able to do anything if there is no consciousness in the body of the creature. This is proved when a man becomes paralyzed in a single organ—the Pran present in the body is unable to keep the concerned organ active when the 'consciousness' decides to leave it.]

The Pranav or Brahm is also known as the Jiva, the individual living being. That is, there is no difference between the supreme transcendental Brahm representing the cosmic Consciousness and the truthful identity of the living being which is his Atma, his soul and true 'self'.

[In other words, Brahm is the cosmic, subtle and sublime Divinity that is represented by the cosmic Consciousness known as Pranav. This Pranav produces the cosmic sound called Naad, which in turn is represented by the monosyllabic word OM. The same Brahm is revealed as the Jiva, the living being, in the form of his truthful identity known as the Atma. This Atma is also known as Hans, the pure and immaculate soul of the creature.

This Brahm is not the physical air which is broadly known as Pran, but is the 'consciousness' known as the Atma that is at the core of everything in this living world. Brahm is the enigmatic and esoteric divine entity that is synonymous with life and consciousness in this creation, and therefore all entities that have life are synonyms of Brahm. But it must be remembered that Brahm is a term applied to that aspect of 'consciousness' that has a cosmic, subtle, sublime and ethereal dimension, rather than a gross and physical one that is confined to this physical gross world.]

Brahm is 'Pranav' because it is the cosmic Consciousness that uniformly permeates each corner of creation, and this Consciousness generates the cosmic sound known as Naad which is recognized and accessed by the means of the word 'OM', which is itself a sound. In other words, Brahm has its manifested sound form as OM. Therefore we deduce that OM, being a word, is a representative of Brahm or Pranav. It is a name assigned to the formless and invisible entity known as the cosmic Consciousness

represented by the terms Brahm as well as Pranav. Just like the Jiva (living being) having a particular name assigned to him, OM is a specific term assigned to Pranav and Brahm.

Brahm, who is the eternal and primary Lord, is also manifested as the Jiva, the living being. How a person who knows this esoteric secret can ever agree to accept that there is difference or some degree of distinction or separation between Brahm and the Jiva because he is convinced that they are one and the same?

He never imagines that there is a difference between Brahm and the Jiva³; he is convinced that both the Jiva and Brahm are in reality the same Consciousness existing in two different planes—with the Jiva symbolizing the grosser aspect of creation and Brahm standing for the subtler aspect of creation (2)."

(18) Atharva Veda's *Bhavana Upanishad*, verse no. 2/21-25—

"Verse no. 2/21 = The ten vital winds known as Prans (literally the life of all living beings, so called because the Pran injects life and consciousness in the otherwise lifeless body of the organism) having the ten Gods and Goddesses known as Sarwa-siddhi-pradaa etc. are the following—Pran, Apaana, Udaana, Samaana, Vyaana, Naaga, Kurma, Krikan, Devdutta, and Dhananjaya (2/21).

"Verse no. 2/22 = These vital winds called 'Prans' are grouped under five classes depending upon their role and interaction in the body of the creature, as well as their contribution in his meditative practices. Thus, we have five main categories of Prans—viz. Rechaka (that which is exhaled or expelled, or helps in this process, say expelling of mucous, stool and urine), Puraka (that which is inhaled or fills up the body, or helps in the process of filling up the body, say with nutrition etc.), Shoshaka (that which helps in absorption, say of nutrition), Dhaahaka (that which burns, keeps the internal fire ignited and helps in, say, digestion, burning waste in the body, keeping the body warm and energized), and Plaavaka (that which floods or inundates; that which helps in circulation and movement) (2/22).

"Verse no. 2/23 = These vital winds serve the dual role of either concluding life by scalding it or burning it ('Kshaarak'—to scald or corrode), or by holding the life together, nourish it like a son and take care of it like a child ('Daar'—to hold together, to harbour; 'Daarak'—to treat like a son or child).

Similarly, they either produce mental and emotional excitement, agitation and discomfort for the creature ('Kshobhak') or give him pleasure and comfort by being attractive and charming for him ('Mohak'). [For instance, when the air accumulates inside the body, it produces a sense of great discomfort; the man feels bloated and develops a headache. On the other hand, a sweet and cool breeze is soothing for his nerves; the breath is another example of the air's benevolent role as a sustainer of life.] (2/23).

"Verse no. 2/24 = These vital winds are absolutely necessary for all human beings; they help him to be attracted to food and helps him to digest all the four types of food—viz.

that which is chewed, that which is licked, that which is sucked or sipped, and that which is drunk.

[The reason is that the vital winds regulate all the functions in the body. If the vital winds are working properly and in prime shape it translates into the body being healthy and robust, and such a body would like to eat and drink merrily as compared to a diseased body where the vital winds malfunction, resulting in the body abhorring food and drink.] (2/24).

“Verse no. 2/25 = These vital winds are a form of the fire element in as much as like the fire they are absolutely essential for life and its sustenance in this creation. In fact, both the fire and the air complement each other—as is evident from the fact that the fire needs air to remain burning, and the air which is warm is conducive to life as opposed to chilly air which freezes life instead of fostering it. Hence, the ten Prans (mentioned in 2/21) are the external form of the fire element and are deemed to be ten subtle Gods that sustain life in this creation.

[This verse highlights the paradoxical miracle of creation—the wind and the fire appear to be eternally inimical to each other, for the wind can blow out any raging fire, but, at the same time, the fire needs air to burn and keep burning. Similarly, the fire can force the wind to show movement inspite of its reluctance as is evident when air begins to blow around a lighted fire due to convection currents, and hot air can cause widespread havoc as observed during wild forest fires, but if the air lacks warmth and is freezing cold it would snuff life out of this earth and we protect ourselves against chilly winds instead of welcoming them. The vital winds inside the body help the creature only as long as the fire element present inside the body keeps the latter warm. Otherwise, the body would become cold and dead, and the same air which sustains life inside it would make it bloated.

So we see the symbiotic relationship between the air and the fire elements of creation. The air is needed by the fire to keep itself alive, and the fire is needed by the air if the latter is to foster life in this world.] (2/25).”

-----*****-----

The Pentagon of Creation

According to the Upanishads

Chapter 3

THE PANCH KOSHAS

(The five vital Sheaths or Cells)

The Atma, the pure conscious soul of the creature, is said to live in a body that constitutes of five sheaths or cells. In other words, the Atma is present in an enclosure that has five consecutive rings around it, acting like the walls of a great fort. Some of the Upanishads that describe this Panch Kosha are the following—

- (i) Rig Veda—*Mudagal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 5.
- (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda—*Paingalo-panishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 4.
- (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—*Taittiriya Upanishad*, Valli 2, Anuvak 3-6; *Sarwasaar Upanishad*, verse no. 5; *Kath Rudra Upanishad*, verse nos. 21-26 (Panch Kosha and Panch Atma).

The Panch Kosha—These are the five sheaths covering or enveloping the Atma are as follows—(i) The food sheath; (ii) the vital air sheath; (iii) the mental sheath; (iv) the intellectual sheath; (v) and the bliss sheath.

The Food Sheath:—Is the physical body and derives its name because it is nourished by the food eaten by the creature. It consists of five organs of perception (eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin) and five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, genitals and anus).

The Vital Air Sheath:—Is the five-fold faculties of perception (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching), excretion (faeces, urine, sperm, sputum, sweat etc.), digestion (stomach, intestine, liver, pancreas, gall bladder, appendix), circulation (blood stream, artery, vein, capillary, heart) and thinking (the power to entertain, absorb and assimilate new information and thought).

The Mental Sheath:—It consists of the equipment which receives external stimuli through the sense organs and links it to the organs of action. Integrated response of body to the stimuli is done through the mind sheath. It is a continuous flow of thoughts. Because the mind is characterised by being in a state of flux, the mind (mental sheath), which is like a clerk, receives information (as stimuli) from the organs of perception and dispatches them to either the organs of action or the intellect when certain situations demand intelligent thinking and discrimination. Therefore, the mental sheath controls the vital air sheath and the food sheath.

The Intellect Sheath:—It acts as a controlling mechanism over the mind; It regulates, filters and modifies the response to the various stimuli. It has the discriminatory power which the mind, left alone to it, lacks.

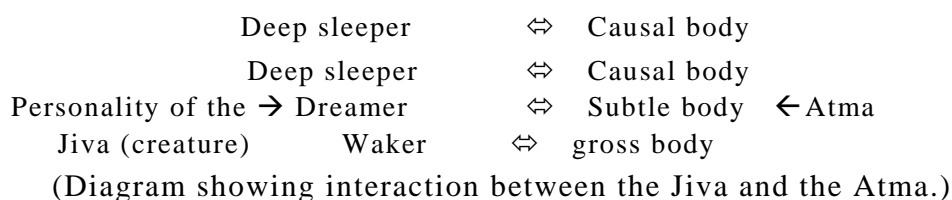
The intellect sheath is the chief of the whole setup—in fact it controls the mind sheath, and through it, the functioning of the creature. It is the task master that directs the reckless horde of school boys running amok hither and thither, as it were. Those boys who obey this teacher become civilised and educated while the rest of the bunch remains buffoons or ruffians. The intellect can distinguish between the good and the bad, which the mental sheath cannot. The intellect can see beyond the realm of the known while the mind cannot. The intellect sheath is the spring board for all ideas and ideologies. The intellect helps to stabilise and channelise the mind even as the dam controls the river and harnesses its immense energy to produce powerful electricity.

These two sheaths—the mind and the intellect—are called the subtle sheaths or bodies. They have no physical structure in conventional terms like the gross or physical body called the food sheath or Anna Maya Kosh (consisting of the organs of perception and organs of action) as well as the air sheath (called the Pran Maya Kosh) of the creature. This subtle sheath has only functional aspect. The mental and intellect sheaths are like software of a computer vis-à-vis the food and vital sheaths which resemble the hardware paraphernalia of the entire system.

The Bliss Sheath:—Is the innermost sheath surrounding the Atma/the soul. It consists of ‘inherent tendencies’ or ‘Vasanas’ and ‘Vrittis’ before they are manifested into thoughts or actions. The intellect, mind etc. perform under the guidance and control of the bliss sheath. It is so-called because an individual experiences relative bliss, happiness, joy, contentedness, peace and tranquility when he is associated with it.

In the waking and dream states, a man experiences constant agitation of the mind, but once he reaches the realm of deep sleep state (bliss sheaths), he feels undisturbed, tranquil, peaceful and full of bliss. All agitations cease here. It is a relative experience vis-à-vis the other sheaths. This sheath is also called the Causal Body of the creature.

The five sheaths are all inane, inert and inactive, and they constitute of matter. This together forms the personality of the Jiva, the living creature. He is conscious of all that his happening around him but these five sheaths are inert themselves. So naturally, there must be something distinct and separate from these sheaths that lend the Jiva the so-called life or consciousness. That factor which lends life or consciousness to the Jiva is called Atma, pure consciousness or the pure self of the creature. It is also the true identity or self of the Jiva.



We shall now read what these Upanishads have to say on this esoteric subject.

(1) The Rig Veda's *Mudagal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 5--

“The 5 sheaths/coverings/veils/shrouds surrounding the Atma consists of the following—
(i) Food Sheath or Anna Maye Kosh which forms the outer gross physical body, (ii) Vital

Wind Sheath or the Pran Maye Kosh, (iii) Mind Sheath or the Mano Maye Kosh consisting of the mind, (iv) Intellect Sheath or the Gyan Maye Kosh consisting of the faculty of intellect, wisdom, erudition and discrimination, and (v) Bliss Sheath or the Anand Maye Kosh that covers such concepts as bliss and happiness.”

(2) Shukla Yajur Veda’s *Paingal Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 4 describes the Panch Koshas as follows—‘The Five Sheaths’ or ‘Koshas’¹ (cells within which the creation would live; the habitat of this living world; the subtle units that harbour creation in its most basic form) were created by the Creator. These are the following—‘Annamaye Kosh’ or the food sheath, ‘Pranmaye Kosh’ or the vital wind sheath, ‘Manomaye Kosh’ or the mental sheath, ‘Vigyanmaye Kosh’ or the intellect sheath, and ‘Anandmaye Kosh’ or the bliss sheath. [These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object.]

The Annamaye Kosh is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitutes food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The Pranmaye Kosh consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaan, and Samaan) along with the five organs of actions (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The Manomaye Kosh consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the Vigyanmaye Kosh consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perceptions.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the ‘Ling Deha’ of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.

The sheath in which the pure conscious self is not aware of the ‘Ling Deha’ is called Anandmaye Kosh. This forms the causal body of the creature (4).”

(3) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Valli 2, Anuvak 3-6—

“Anuvak 3 = The Anna Maye Kosh, or the gross body called the ‘food sheath’ (mentioned in Valli 2), surrounds this Pran, which are the different vital winds present inside the body in its second sheath called the Pran Maye Kosh or the ‘vital air sheath’. This Pran Maye Kosh is enclosed by the outer shell of the gross body called the Anna Maye Kosh and forms its integral life. This is because without the vital winds the body (or the food sheath) cannot survive and live in this world; it would lose all its relevance and significance. [This is because without the presence of the Pran or vital life-bearing winds inside the body, the latter would be dead, and no one likes a dead body which has no Pran or ‘life’ in it.]²

This vital air sheath encloses the third layer consisting of the vital signs of consciousness in a creature. This third layer or cell is called the ‘Mano Maye Kosh’ or the ‘mental sheath’. This mental sheath or the Mano Maye Kosh wafts and wefts through

the entire being of the living creature because it consists of the mind which controls all the functions of the creature's body as well as his interactions with the external world³.

This *Mano Maye Kosh* or the mental sheath is also a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahman known as Purush (because this mind exhibits all the subtle, sublime and grand virtues and magnificent qualities displayed by Brahman). Verily, it is Brahman personified; the mind has the same dimension, possesses the same qualities and virtues, and displays the same potential and abilities as the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, all-pervading and all-encompassing Brahman who is most profound, magnificent and grand yet most enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious⁴.

In fact, both these two sheaths—the vital wind or air sheath and the mental sheath—have the same shape, form and dimension as that of Brahman. Even as the sublime and subtle Brahman has no fixed shape and size and fits into all available space, being all-pervading and diffused uniformly in the entire creation, the two entities that constitute the vital air and mental sheaths, viz. the air or wind and the mind, also follow the characteristic features of their parent Brahman⁵.

This body of Brahman (i.e. the mind) has its 'head' representing the Yajur Veda⁶; its 'right' side or flank representing the Rig Veda; its 'left' side or flank representing the Sam Veda; its Atma or consciousness residing in its bosom represented by its 'middle' part as the entity that commands it is its ability and authority to give orders and issue instructions⁷; and the sacred hymns or Mantras of the Atharva Veda envisioned by the sages Atharva and Angira form its hind part or 'legs' (on which it is established)⁸.

This verse is dedicated to that Brahman which has the mind as its personification or manifestation, whose form is revealed in the form of the mind with its astounding abilities and stupendous potentials (1).

[Note—¹When the *Pran* decides to leave the body, the latter dies. No other organ is potent and capable to make the body live once the *Pran* decides to leave it. Therefore, the 'age' of any creature is decided by the *Pran* present in its body. This unique ability of *Pran* makes it the most revered and praised entity in the living world, and therefore to be raised to the high pedestal of being treated as Brahman personified. This virtue of *Pran* that nothing can live without it, and that it is to be worshipped with the same devotion and honour reserved for the supreme transcendental Authority in creation known as Brahman have been magnificently brought out, inter alia, in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 4/1/3, 5/13 and 6/1; and in Chandogya Upanishad, 1/2-3, 1/11, 4/4/3 and entire Canto 5.

²As has been noted in the note of Valli 2, the *Anna Maye Kosh* has the *Pran Maye Kosh* inside it. This *Pran Maye Kosh* is called the Vital Air Sheath which lies within the food sheath and outside of the Mental Sheath called the *Mano Maye Kosh*. The vital airs that keep the body alive reside in this sheath. Once the vital airs or wind leave the body, it becomes dead inspite the fact that all other organs are there as before.

At the time of death, they collect themselves and make a simultaneous exit from the body as described in Subalo-panishad, Canto 15.

How these vital winds control the functioning of the body has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 9. Similarly, how the creature is able to interact with the world with their aid has been described in Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse no. 2.

³According to metaphysical concepts, the body of the organism is broadly divided into three levels—viz. the *gross body* consisting of the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin) and five organs of actions (hands, legs, mouth, genitals and

excretory), the *subtle body* consisting of the mind and intellect, and the *causal body* consisting of the pure consciousness called the Atma.

⁴The fact that the mind or *Mana* is a personification of the supreme Brahm, displaying the latter's stupendous glories and eclectic virtues, has been a constant refrain of all the Upanishads. Refer for example Chandogya 3/18, 4/4/3 and 7/3 as well as Brihad Aranyak 4/1/6 to name a few. The word Purush means someone who lives in a 'Pur' or a place of dwelling. Since the Supreme Being lives in the body of the creature, making the body his habitat, he is called 'Purush'. The astounding qualities and eclectic virtues as well as the magnificent abilities and stupendous potentials which the sublime mind displays are some of the immeasurable ones that are so characteristic of the enigmatic and esoteric Brahm. This is metaphorically said when mind is said to be a manifestation of Brahm.

The Mana or mind is characteristic with having doubts and confusions as opposed to the intellect which is called Buddhi. Both work in tandem to drive the body of the creature—the mind receives the inputs from the external world through the medium of the organs of perception and then 'instructs or issues commands' to the organs of action to act accordingly. Routine matters are handled in this mundane way. But the intellect, which is senior to the mind in the secretariat of the king called the Atma, is send all those files that require thought and decision. It is the intellect that comes in direct contact with the king, the Atma, and when it is unable to decide for itself, it consults the king, the Atma.

⁵At the time of creation, the human body was created as an image of the *Viraat Purush*. The gross body is therefore is the microcosmic or miniature form of the vast macrocosmic form of Brahm whose gross body is called Viraat. Now, even as water and air take the shape of the vessel in which they are kept, this vast creation which was formed from the body of the Viraat also took up the shape of the parent, i.e. of the Viraat, and then was filled with the elements which naturally would fit into the available space, which in this case was the body of the Viraat. Thus, they assumed the same outer contours and shape as that of the body of the Viraat. In other words, all the subtle entities living inside the gross body and uniformly present throughout in a diffused manner must take the shape of the external covering if they are to be honoured with the epithets of being subtle, uniformly diffused and all-pervading.

⁶Those hymns in which the number of letters has no fixed rules set for composition of a poetical verse, called the Chanda, are collectively called Yaju. Since the mind has a reckless tendency, jumping from one subject to another in quick succession and not remaining fixed for long, i.e. it has no systematic way of functioning, it is likened to *Yaju*. Such verses predate the organized pattern of hymn composition, and it is from them that the systematic pattern evolved. So they are senior to their poetical brethren, and hence metaphorically called the 'head'.

When an idea comes to the mind at the beginning, it is usually not well organised. When that idea is expressed in words, the words also reflect this primary stage of thought. But thoughts originate in the mind; they require words to be expressed, which in turn require the letters to have a structure, the mouth to speak them (and the need of the tongue to make articulate speech that makes sense of those words, instead of just guttural sounds), the throat to create the voice to that would allow the mouth to speak, the ear to receive this sound, and finally the mind again to interpret what has been said. All these entities are located above the chest, and therefore 'Yaju' is likened to the head of Brahm who actually does the speaking.

Further, since the offering to the sacred fire is done by saying 'Swaha' which invariably need the services of the mouth and the entire apparatus concerned with speaking, besides the fact that the mind uses the head to direct the coordination of the

different organs to perform the fire sacrifice, the *Yajur Veda* is regarded as a symbol of the 'head' of Brahm.

When the mind hears something, it forms its own opinion and tends to either swerve to the right or the left of the center. With the 'rightist' inclination, views, the mind is said to be represented by the *Rig Veda* which has a high level of eclectic verses. With the propensity of the mind to delve in worldly matters as symbolised by its tendency to sing and dance to the tune of this charming world and be attached to it and be fascinated by it, the 'leftist' tendencies of the mind are symbolised by the *Sam Veda* because it involves singing and drinking of Som which is an intoxicating liquid.

⁷Only a person in authority can give orders and issue instructions to others. The supreme Brahm is that authority that commands everything else in this creation, and therefore Brahm is the 'soul' or Atma which is the 'consciousness' present in the otherwise lifeless and inert piece of flesh that the mind is to drive it and enable it to display the stupendous and magnificent qualities and virtues that it actually does. Therefore, the mind has the ability to give orders and issue instructions at its core that gives it its great value and importance.

⁸The great Mantras visualised by the two sages Atharva and Angiraa are the best ones which guide the mind in its endeavours, and so they are the ones which help to give it glory and majesty. Hence, these hymns are said to be the mind's 'Pratistha' or that which helps something to get established and acquire fame and honour.]

"Anuvak 4 = [This Anuvak describes the glorious fruit of Brahm-realisation, and it goes on to describe the fourth sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath which is separate from the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath.]

That mystical state of divine attainment and eclectic bliss which remains beyond the reach of the combined efforts of the speech and the mind (i.e. which is indescribable by the faculty of speech and cannot be accessed by the mind and its various faculties of perception) is called 'Brahm-Anand', or the bliss of Brahm-realisation. A fortunate person who has experienced this enigmatic, nectar-like and divine state of rarefied spiritual existence has no fear from any quarters¹.

The Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath is like the Atma (basis, foundation and support) of its predecessor Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath².

Inside it is the next sheath or cell called the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath. This sheath or cell (i.e. the intellect) forms the core of its outer sheath (i.e. the mental), completely filling it from the inside³.

Like its predecessor, this Vigyan Maye Kosh is a revelation of the stupendous abilities, eclectic attributes, divine virtues and magnificent qualities so characteristic of Brahm. In other words, the intellect sheath is the higher level of the subtle body of the divine Being called the Purush residing in the body of the individual creature, and it controls his mind, his vital winds and his physical body along with its gross organs.

[The intellect is like the Prime Minister of the Sovereign, the pure conscious Atma which is the creature's true 'self'. The Atma controls the body as well as the world through the medium of the mind-intellect apparatus called the Mano Maye and Vigyan Maye Koshs respectively. The intellect supports the mind and forms its solid foundation; the intellect helps the activities of the mind from behind the scene, and therefore is called the de facto 'brain' or 'soul' or 'Atma' of the mind.]

This manifestation of Brahm in a subtle form or shape of the intellect sheath, or the Vigyan Maye Kosh, has the 'head' representing the grand virtue known as 'Shradha', or having devotion, conviction, belief and faith. Its right' side or flank is representative of 'Rit' (the eternal, unequivocal and universal Truth which is sublime and subtle, invisible and intangible). Its 'left' side or flank is representative of Satya or truth (the visible aspects of that universal Truth)⁴; its 'middle' part (i.e. the heart region) is a representative of Yoga (literally that establishes a union between the unseen Truth and the seen Truth; also referring to meditation and contemplation by which this coordination is brought about); and all its glorious and divine virtues, its magnificent qualities and astounding abilities, its wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment, skills, expertise, scholarship and such other noble and auspicious virtues that help it to acquire such a matchless and unique position in the hierarchy of evolution is like the tail end or lower part or the 'legs' on which it stands⁵ (1).

[Note—¹With *Brahm-realisation*, the self-realised person realises that the body is not his true self, rather it is the pure consciousness residing in his bosom as his Atma. This Atma is immortal and fearless in the sense that it cannot be destroyed and harmed by anybody else. Besides this, the Atma is the same within his own body and that of the rest of the creatures of this creation. So even as no one fears his own self, there is no cause of having fear from others in the view of a self-realised man.

Again, when the man is intoxicated with the ethereal and supernatural feeling of ecstasy and eternal bliss, he becomes immune and indifferent to all external stimuli of either pain or joys originating from this world, which is a metaphoric way of saying that he has no fear from being disturbed by them. Thus, such a man remains in a perpetual state of bliss, peace and happiness much like a man who has drunk some ambrosia and then has nothing to do with other liquids which would give him only temporary bliss, peace and happiness.

²This is because the *mind* controls the functioning of the entire body, including the vital winds or airs that actually carry out the orders of the mind in controlling or regulating the different functional aspects of the living body such as intake of food, its digestion, its assimilation, the circulation and even distribution of blood and nutrients in the body, excretion, maintenance of equilibrium and general order inside the body, its movements and other such vital functions that distinguish a living body from a dead entity.

Without the active, alert and agile mind, the body of a *man* would no better than a *tree* which also has life forces in it but no mind, or some *lower organism* which have movement and other landmark signs of life but no mind to think and decide for its self.

³As has been explained in note to Valli no. 3, the *intellect* is the part of the brain which controls the mind. Even the animal has a mind, but what distinguishes them from humans is the presence of 'intelligence'; that is why a man is called 'an intelligent animal'.

Left to its own devices, the mind can carry out only the routine work pertaining to the functioning of the body, but it is the intellect that guides it all its constructive endeavours and progressive activities. That is why an 'intelligent' mind which has sharpness and wit, alertness and discriminatory abilities, profound wisdom and deep insight, capacity to critically analyse and rationally predict, and which is steady and even-keeled is much sought after as compared to a mind which lacks these eclectic virtues and values.

Thus we observe that all the three units of creation—the *tree* or any other member of the botanical kingdom, the animal or any other member of the zoological kingdom except the man, and the human being—have life forces in them. But the component that sets them

apart from one another is the presence of the mind and intellect. The tree has life but no mind; the animal has mind but no intelligence of the same level as that present in the humans; and the man who has a highly evolved instrument of the mind-intellect combine which makes him the highest placed species in creation.

⁴The fact that truth is a manifestation of Brahm has been very magnificently brought out in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 5 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

⁵A similar analogy is used in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad when the Supreme Being is likened to the sacrificial horse in Canto 1, Brahmin 1. The special qualities mentioned in this stanza make a man distinguished, highly respected and acclaimed in society. This sets him apart from other men who lack these divine eclectic virtues, and act as the defining criterion to determine which man is famed for his auspicious intelligence and which man isn't. We would observe that each Valli moves one step inwards, starting from the outermost sheath called the food sheath, then moving inwards to the second sheath called the vital wind/air sheath, followed progressively by the mind sheath and then the intellect sheath.]

“Anuvak 5 = [This Anuvak elaborates upon why the intelligent mind is so valued and honoured in the entire setup.]

It is ‘Vigyan’ (referring to intelligent and deep knowledge of any subject; skills and expertise in any field of knowledge; the ability to critically analyse and make intelligent deductions from available knowledge and thereby make rational predictions and then apply them in practice) that helps not only to successfully complete the various deeds and actions, including the fire and other religious sacrifices as well as other ceremonial rituals and religious sacraments, but also to develop better ways to do them and better ways to benefit from them. That is why all the exalted Gods laud this virtue and honour and praise it as a grand personified form of the supreme transcendental Brahm¹.

Those wise ones who treat Vigyan as a personification of Brahm and a manifestation of Brahm's stupendous eclectic qualities and virtues, those who are firmly convinced of this and remain grouted in this belief without any doubt or confusion as to its veracity, are able to overcome all the evil consequences of the various inauspicious deeds done by their bodies (in the course of living a mundane life), and they become fully contented and fulfilled².

Like in the previous cases, this Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath forms the basis and foundation on which its predecessor known as the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath rests. It is the intelligence that drives the mind and lends the latter its astounding capabilities and potentials. In other words, without the intelligence, the mind would be useless much like the body without the presence of life known as Pran in it. Hence, the Vigyan or intellect is the ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ that drives the mind and gives it its magnificent glory, potentials and fame.

Inside this intellect sheath there is the fifth sheath called the ‘Anand Maye Kosh’ or the ‘bliss sheath’. It consists of the causal body of the creature where the Atma—which is eternally blissful and full of beatitude and felicity—resides, giving this sheath its name. The intellect sheath fully surrounds and encloses the bliss sheath. In other words, the ‘consciousness’ that appears in the form of the subtle body called the mind and the intellect which exhibits stupendous and astounding potentials and powers that even the gross body fails to exhibit is different from the ‘consciousness’ that resides in the bliss

sheath of the causal body. Though primarily the 'consciousness' is one and a non-dual entity which is universal and immutable, still its role varies from body to body. The purest and subtlest form of the universal consciousness is the one seen in the 'causal body' and surrounded by the 'bliss sheath'. As the word 'causal' indicates, this consciousness is the cause of the existence of the entire world, including the subtle and gross body in which it lives. Since it is covered by the 'bliss sheath', it remains in a perpetual state of blissfulness and contentedness. This does not apply to its other manifestations as the subtle or gross bodies—because it has now been tainted by the characteristic attributes of these bodies. So, when the consciousness is reflected through the mind-intellect complex, it exhibits the qualities characteristic of this complex. Similarly, when it is reflected through the medium of the gross body it reflects the characteristic qualities and attributes typical of the gross body.

That divine, eclectic, unique and sublime entity which is an embodiment of eternal and infinite 'Anand' (beatitude and felicity; bliss and happiness; peace and tranquility) is called the Atma, and it is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Consciousness that resides in the body of a creature in that form. This cosmic Consciousness is the supreme Brahm personified. [Here the deity is Brahm and its form is the Atma. It is surrounded by the bliss sheath while it resides in the causal body of the creature.]³.

This sublime 'Purush' (the supreme Brahm or the cosmic Consciousness) residing in the body as the Atma or soul has the 'head' representing the divine virtue of having Prem (love and affections). Its 'right' side or flank represents the divine virtue of Moda (pleasure, delight, happiness, sweetness etc.); its 'left' side or flank represents the divine virtues of Pramod (delight, exultation, exhilaration, joy and happiness); its fundamental nature that characterizes it and which forms its central core is the eclectic and divine virtue of Anand (extreme bliss and happiness; profound beatitude and felicity); and its unique exalted stature and high position as Brahm personified is symbolically its hind part or its 'legs' which helps it to acquire this peerless and glittering status.

This verse is dedicated to this Atma or the supreme transcendental Brahm in the form of the pure consciousness residing in the body of the creature as his true 'self' (1).

[Note—¹The profound importance of *Vigyan* has been propounded in a number of Upanishads which say in one voice that 'Vigyan is Brahm's magnificent glories personified; Vigyan and Brahm are synonymous with each other'. Vigyan is the eclectic virtue possessed by the mind that establishes the latter's supremacy over elementary entities in creation. When the brain can make intelligent decisions and critically analyse anything from all possible angles, it has the ability to acquire scientific knowledge about that particular thing, which is called 'Vigyan'. It is the higher level of the brain that deals with Vigyan, as opposed to the routine matters that are dealt with its lower levels of intelligence. For example, the mind can learn even the toughest of subjects, but only a few people can have the depth of wisdom, insight and foresight that comes with high level of mental development that would set them aside from the rest of the flock. Only a few people can critically analyse and penetrate deep into the hidden implications of what has been learnt by them by studying the scriptures to make new discoveries and arrive at new deductions. That is, their brain is 'scientifically' tuned; it is analytical, critical and discerning. Only such a brain is able to see the reality and achieve a higher level of success whether it pertains to the material world or to the spiritual world. Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 6/14, and 7/7.

²A wise and self-realised man understands that all the material needs for which he has been hankering all his life, committing all sorts of evil deeds and engaging in unrighteous actions with his body are perishable and impermanent, so the comfort and happiness that they provide are proportionately transient and impermanent. Besides this, the wise man realises that his body itself is perishable and impermanent, as opposed to his Atma which is eternal and an infinite treasure of bliss and peace. Once this wisdom dawns upon his mind, which is only possible with application of Vigyan or having a deep insight into and critical analysis of all available data and experiences, the man begins to distance himself from the body and all its deeds. Once this aloofness takes firm roots and the man dissociates himself from the body, there is no question of his being accused of any good or bad deed done by the body because 'he' remains only a mute spectator vis-à-vis the actions undertaken by the body. His 'true self', i.e. his Atma, remains neutral, uninvolved and untainted. Since the Atma is eternally a fount of beatitude and felicity, there remains nothing to be sought either from this world or from the body simply because what they have to offer is temporary and transient like a bubble of water.

³In other words, the 'soul' or Atma of the creature is a personification of Brahm with the eclectic virtue of having eternal bliss and peace. Besides this, since Brahm has other eclectic auspicious qualities and divine virtues in it, such as having all the virtues and potentials exhibited by the mind and intellect as well as by all the vital winds and the gross body with its organs of perception and action combined, Atma also displays them as its inherent characteristic qualities and virtues.]

“Anuvak 6 = [This Anuvak describes the bliss sheath and the eclectic state of Brahm-realisation that leads to the Truth.]

Verily, those who do not believe in the truth of the existence of Brahm or deny that Brahm exists become false themselves, whereas those who accept the truth that Brahm exists themselves become an embodiment of the eternal Truth¹. Such latter types of people are regarded by wise ones as true saints and holy souls.

That which is the Atma or soul or spirit of the Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is the same entity which is the Atma or soul or spirit of the Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). [In other words, the essential entity or factor that drives the intellect and lends it its stupendous qualities and virtues as well as its magnificent powers and potentials is the same entity that resides in the heart of the creature and enables it to derive pleasure and happiness, joys and bliss from any perception received by the creature from any source.]

Now, after the wise teacher has taught these profound truths to his disciple, the following questions arise—Is it possible for an ignorant person (who is unaware of the truth about Brahm as evidenced by the fact that a doubt about Brahm's existence arises in his mind) to attain Brahm (i.e. is it possible for him to achieve the exalted stature of emancipation and salvation which is tantamount to realising the supreme Truth) after death? Does a wise and realised person (who has no doubt about the truth of Brahm) indeed attain Brahm after death?²

To answer this question, the wise teacher said—‘That supreme transcendental One decided to replicate himself into numerous forms. So he did Tapa (i.e. he did severe penance and made sincere and diligent effort in this direction). It is by doing Tapa that he created all that which is here in creation. Having done so, he entered what he created in an imperceptible manner as the Atma of the creation³.

Thus, the supreme One (Brahm), who is an embodiment of the eternal Truth, manifested himself in a visible form as the gross body of creation, and at the same time remained in an invisible form as the subtle body and the pure conscious Atma of creation. That supreme One assumed a form which could be easily described and discerned while retaining his primary enigmatic and esoteric form which is indescribable and indiscernible. One of his forms (the visible, physical and mundane world) needed some or the other kind of physical support to survive, while his other form was so mystical and ethereal that it did not need anything to support it (as it itself was the support of everything else in existence). One aspect of his form was the conscious animate world while the other was the inanimate world. Similarly, everything in the behavioural world, whether it was falsehood or truthfulness, was a manifestation of that single, immutable, irrefutable and unequivocal Truth that is both what is apparent as well as what is not apparent.

Verily, whatever there is, whatever is experienced and witnessed here, is regarded by those who are well-versed in the primary knowledge of Brahm as a revelation of the eternal, universal and infinite Truth.

This verse is about ‘that’ Truth in the form of ‘this’ truth⁴ (1).

[Note—¹This is a natural corollary of what has already been said in the previous Vallis. In brief, since everything, from the miniscule to the grandest, is suffused and soaked in Brahm, the latter being all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent, and the fact that everything in existence is nothing but one or the other manifestation of this majestic, mystical and most fascinating entity known as Brahm, it follows that nothing in existence is outside the purview of Brahm and that nothing falls beyond the outer perimeter of Brahm. Therefore, the very person who makes the statement that ‘Brahm is not there’ is speaking an evident lie as all that is very much visible, verifiable and tangible around us in this world simply cannot be denied and wished away. Denying Brahm is like denying the existence of the true self and the actual, physical and tangible presence of the world which is an incredulous proposition.

²The question whether a person’s Atma lives after *death* or not has been asked by Nachiketa and answered in great detail by the God of death himself in Katho-panishad. Other Upanishads that answer this eternal question about death are, inter alia, the following—Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/36, 4/4/1-25, 5/10-5/11, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; and Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1.

The metaphor of the *tree* has been brilliantly employed to explain ‘what happens after’ death in Brihad Aranyak 3/9/28, and in Chandogya 6/11/1-3.

³This fact has been described in all the Upanishads dealing with the genesis of creation. For example, the following Upanishads have this idea explicitly mentioned--(a) Aiteriyo-panishad of Rig Veda tradition; (b) Mudgalo-panishad of Rig Veda tradition, in its Canto 2-4; (c) Chandogya-panishad of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Section 19, Canto 4, Section 17, verse nos. 1-3, Canto 6, Section 2-10; (d) Painglo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1-2; (e) Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1-15; (f) Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, Brahmin 1-2, 4-5, Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 18, Canto 6, Brahmin 4; and (g) the present Taittiriyo-panishad in its Valli (Canto) 2, Anuvak (sub-canto) 2.

The very fact that the supreme One ‘desired’ or ‘decided’ to replicate himself and ‘procreated’ shows that he had consciousness and the ability to do so, a virtue that establishes its primary abilities to ‘exist and create’ even when nothing else existed in the

beginning. Therefore he predated this creation and existed after the end of the last creation. In other words, it is beyond the reach of death, and is therefore eternal and imperishable. It is possible to replicate oneself by the asexual means as is shown by the invertebrates of the animal kingdom. Besides, the man's sub-conscious mind also exhibits astounding powers to create a vast array of colourful scenes in the world of dreams.

⁴The word *that* indicates the mystical Truth which is beyond comprehension and imagination. 'That' Truth is not 'this' Truth—i.e. the eternal immortal Truth which is beyond comprehension and reach of the mind and intellect is not this mortal world, but at the same time since everything that exists is a manifestation of the 'one' Truth that is immutable and indivisible, this world is also 'true' and a reflection of that truth. A reflection or image is not 'true' in the technical sense because it cannot be touched and felt like the original, but it nevertheless does have an existence because any real object will produce a reflection in a mirror. This is proved by the fact that reflection is not formed of ghosts and phantoms.

Further, Brahm is 'truth personified', and this world is a manifestation of Brahm and hence of this 'truth'. Therefore, the world has to be 'true' albeit in a reflective mode. This is also because truth cannot produce non-truth or falsehood. This is the great paradox about Brahm vis-à-vis this world and the body of the creature as laid out in this verse. That is also why the scriptures call Brahm as an entity that is best described by the words 'Neti Neti' meaning 'not this not this', or 'neither this nor that'.

This verse essentially asserts that the supreme Brahm has taken up his residence in the creation as its consciousness called the Atma. The later resides in the body and does so many things and creates a world of its own. This world is visible and for all practical purposes 'true' as it is verifiable and tangible. On the other hand it is perishable, changeable and transient which makes it 'false' because something that is true would be steady, uniform and unchangeable. In short, it presents two opposing propositions—one of falsehood and the other of truth. On the contrary, the Atma is 'only true', without any trace of falsehood, because it is eternal, steady, universal, unchanging and imperishable—which are the characteristic features of 'truth'. So Brahm appears to be both 'true' as well as 'false' for a person who is not fully aware of the fundamental truth of Brahm, creating a doubt in his mind about Brahm's very existence.

As to the answer to the twin questions asked in this verse, the position is that since everything in existence is Brahm personified, those who are ignorant about the reality as well as those who are well-versed about it attain two destinations—the former take rebirth in 'this' world which is 'true' for them, while the latter attain emancipation and salvation by attaining 'that' world which is 'true' for them. 'That' world is not somewhere far off but 'here' in the Atma itself, and the Atma lives in 'this' world inside the gross body. So it is the degree of intellectual development and self-realisation that decides for a creature how it sees and observes the presence and truthfulness of Brahm.

The basic concept is that the creature attains that place which he desires for at the time of *death*—refer Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 12 which is very explicit on this point. Further, it also depends upon the creature's mental awareness and conception of what constitutes the 'Truth'. Refer Brihad Aranyak Canto 6, Brahmin 1, verse no. 1-6.]”

(4) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Kathrudra Upanishad*, verse nos. 21-26—

“Verse no. 21. [Verse nos. 21-26 describe the Panch Koshas and the Panch Atmas.*]

The gross body made up of bones and veins etc. of all living beings called Jivas is therefore the result of the deeds done by them. [That is, the Atma, which is the true identity of the individual, assumes a particular physical form, i.e. assumes a particular gross body, depending upon the deeds done by it in its previous life.]¹

Thus, the gross body of the creature is the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath² of the Atma. That is, the pure consciousness has assumed this gross body which is formed and sustained by the food eaten by the individual. When the consciousness reveals itself in this sheath, it is known as the 'Anna Maye Atma', or the consciousness that depends upon food for its survival and which has a gross physical structure much like the gross form in which food exists in creation (as vegetables, cereals, fruits and other eatables)³ (21).

[Note—*Why the five Koshas are called the Panch Atma have been explained in note to verse no. 23 below.

The five Koshas have been described in other Upanishad also. Some of them are (i) Rig Veda—Mudagal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 5; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda—Paingalopanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 4; and (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 3-6; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 5.

¹This concept has been explained in verse no. 20 above. Besides this, the Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60. The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The Sarwasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds.

These concepts and the fact that a creature's destiny depends upon the deeds done by him have been elaborately described elsewhere also in (i) Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 33, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2, 14-16, etc.; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 57-58, 66; (iii) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Canto 7, Section 21; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds.

²The Atma lives surrounded by five sheaths, called the 'Panch Koshas'. These Koshas form the composite structure recognised as the body of the creature or Jiva. The Atma is the 'true self' of the individual Jiva, while these Koshas are the covering sheaths which enclose the Atma and form its habitat during its sojourn in this life. They wrap the Atma and form its outer recognizable form. These Koshas are what give the Atma its visible and recognizable form in this world—such as Godhead, a demon, a human, an animal and a bird. Therefore we can compare the Jiva or his true self the Atma as the glittering gem gifted wrapped in a five-layered cloth which is so magnificently wonderful and fascinatingly unique that more often than not it outshines the glory of the principal entity for which they were meant. In other words, one is so awe-struck by the external

body that he forgets to even un-wrap the package and peer in to look what is hidden inside.

The outermost is called the food sheath or Anna Maye Kosh. The rest of the Koshas are enumerated in the following verses.

³This is an obvious observation because no one has seen the sublime, subtle and invisible 'consciousness' as having an existence except in the form of the signs of life shown by the gross physical body which is sustained by the food eaten by the individual. Thus for all practical purposes, this consciousness, which is perceived in the form of the external form of the body, is recognised as being synonymous with it, i.e. as the Anna Maye Atma in line with the body being called the Anna Maye Kosh because of its dependence on food.]

“Verse no. 22 = Inside this Anna Maye Kosh is another sheath called the ‘Pran Maye Kosh’ or the vital wind sheath. This is the second form in which the consciousness known as the Atma is recognised. Thus, the consciousness that lives inside the gross body in a more subtle form as the vital life-sustaining winds is recognised as the ‘Pran Maye Atma’ in honour of these winds, and also because the Atma and the Pran are both synonymous with each other as far as the life of the individual is concerned as he cannot live without the either of them¹.

Next in this progression comes the ‘Mano Maye Atma’ or the consciousness that has revealed itself as the Mana or the subtle mind of the individual. This pertains to the Mano Maye Kosh or the mind sheath. This form of the consciousness is subtler than the Pran Maye Atma². (22).

[Note—¹Like its predecessor the Anna Maye Atma, the consciousness that flows inside the body and is represented by the vital winds such as Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Samaan and Udaan etc. is known as the Pran Maye Atma, named as such because the vital life sustaining winds are collectively called ‘Pran’.

²The Mana is the subtle mind of the creature and the consciousness that drives the mind and keeps it active and enabled to carry on with its magnificent duties is the Atma consciousness known as Mano Maye Atma.]

“Verse no. 23 = The fourth form that the consciousness takes is called the ‘Vigyan Maye Atma’ because it pertains to the intellect sheath called the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath. This is subtler than the Mano Maye Atma and lives surrounded by the latter.

Subtler than all the other forms of conscious existence of the individual is known as the ‘Anand Maye Atma’ which pertains to the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. This is the innermost layer that surrounds the pure consciousness and is like the transparent veil covering the lighted lamp because it radiates the natural character of the Atma present inside it. Its natural characteristic is to be eternally blissful, contented and happy (23).

[Note—¹It would be noted that the structure that has unfolded is like a circle within a circle. The outer and the first circle is the Anna Maye Atma pertaining to the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, followed by the second inner circle called the Pran Maye Atma pertaining to the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind sheath inside which is the third circle of Mano Maye Atma pertaining to the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, then comes the fourth circle of Vigyan Maye Atma pertaining to the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and finally the fifth one known as the Anand Maye Atma pertaining to the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths are called ‘Atma’ because they

reflect consciousness and life in its various vibrant hues. For instance, the external Kosha called the Pran Maye Kosh which forms the basis of all organs of senses such as those related to perception and those to action have any value and significance for the creature only as long as they have 'life and consciousness' pulsating in each of its pore, cell and tissue. Otherwise they would be worthless and as good as being non-existent. What good and of use is a body which cannot see, hear, taste, feel and smell, or one which cannot move, hold anything, expel waste products from the inside, regenerate and procreate, and generally make life happy and livable for the Jiva—or in brief a body which has no consciousness in it? Since 'life' in all its connotations is synonymous with 'consciousness' or Atma, this Kosha which depends upon food to survive is called the Anna Maye Atma. And this is also the reason why food is equivalent to 'life' or Pran vis-à-vis a Jiva; food is the Atma of all living beings. They just cannot survive without food. The food is necessary for very survival of all life forms because it provides the outer covering that not only provides the necessary energy and strength but acts as a protective covering for the Atma. This is also the reason why the type of food eaten by a creature helps to classify him—such as non-vegetarians and vegetarians; such as carnivorous, herbivorous and omnivorous; such as civilized eaters or savage cannibals etc.

This logic can be extended to cover all the other four remaining sheaths. For instance, the Pran Maye Kosh is called the Pran Maye Atma because the signs of life and vitality that the vital winds present inside the body depict are a reflection of the presence of the consciousness in the body itself, for otherwise the same wind that is also present outside the body does not show any signs of life-sustaining qualities as the one present inside the body. This innate wind element of creation exhibits astounding ability to sustain life and performs miraculous duties of regulating so many functions of the body that life without wind is unthinkable. Had there been no consciousness in the body, the same wind would be worthless and wouldn't be able to sustain and make the body alive as is proved by the fact a dead body from which the Atma has left shows no signs of life and activity inspite of the wind element remaining in it. Thus the wind element that derives its life-sustaining abilities due the presence of the Atma is named after it as the Pran Maye Atma. It is actually the virtues of the Atma reflected in the wind element called the Pran. Both the Pran and the Atma are therefore treated as being synonymous.

Next is the Mano Maye Atma. The mind is the center that is the power-house of the living being; without the mind the creature would not receive any information from the outside world, cannot relate to it and cannot do anything whatsoever. The mind regulates all its functions. This is a clear indication of the mind being a manifestation of the Atma's grand virtues. If there was no consciousness in the body, such as the case of a dead body in which the physical organ called the brain is still present in the head, the mind would not be able to think. The subtle and sublime entity that enables the mind and the subtle heart to think and have emotions is the Atma present inside the body, and therefore the grand virtues and characters of the Atma that are reflected in the form of the creature's Mana is called the Mano Maye Atma.

The Vigyan Maye Atma would then be the virtues of the Atma as reflected by the magnificent potentials and powers as depicted by the intellect present in the creature. The ability of the creature to research and analyse, to ponder and think deeply, to discriminate between the good and the bad etc. are manifestations of the stupendous abilities of the Atma, and therefore that unit or Kosha of the body that carries these functions is called the Vigyan Maye Atma.

Finally, there is the Anand Maye Kosh which encloses the Atma itself. This sheath that encloses the Atma acquires the latter's grand virtues of eternal blissfulness, contentedness and happiness because of its very close proximity to it. When a wise and enlightened Jiva comes in contact with this sheath he finds only one predominant

character, and that is of eternal and undiluted 'Anand' or the state of blessedness marked by beatitude and felicity. He then realises that the closest sheath (the Anand Maye Kosh) is a reflection of these eclectic and sublime virtues of the Atma, and therefore it has been named the Anand Maye Atma.

The concept of the same Atma having various life-forms extending from one Kosha or one-celled organism to five Koshas or five-celled organism can be understood in the following manner also. The Jivas or living creatures in the living world have been classified into five broad categories and their respective forms are as follows:—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa or aspect of the Atma called Anna Maye Kosh or Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jarayuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. (v) The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.]

“Verse no. 24 = These different forms of the Atma enumerated above are just for the purpose of study and each depends upon the other in the order mentioned above—viz. the outer Anna Maye Atma is filled from the inside and is sustained by the Pran Maye Atma. Likewise, the Pran Maye Atma is filled by the Mano Maye Atma from the inside and is sustained by it (24).

“Verse no. 25 = The Mano Maye Atma is filled with the Vigyan Maye Atma from the inside and is sustained by it, and likewise the latter is filled by the Anand Maye Atma and sustained by it from the inside¹ (25).

[Note—¹This concept can be understood by a simple example of the earth. The earth's body consists of layers after layers of rocks and other structural materials of varying density and strength, with each inner layer forming a base and support for its immediate outer layer, and this progression continues till we reach the outer surface of the earth which would obviously collapse if the earth were not supported by these inner rings that

form the different strata of the earth's structure. It is like the case of a hollow ball which cannot survive any external pressure and beating as compared to a solid ball which would not collapse despite it being punched and hammered or pressed in from the outside.

That is, the inner-most core of this ball-like structure consists of the Anand Maye Kosh and the consciousness that gives it its life is called the Anand Maye Atma. This central core is surrounded by the Vigyan Maye Kosh and the consciousness that lends it its vitality and life is called the Vigyan Maye Atma. This applies to the other layers also—viz. the Mano Maye Atma corresponding to the Mano Maye Kosh surrounds this Vigyan Maye Atma and is surrounded by the Pran Maye Atma pertaining to the Pran Maye Kosh; and finally the Anna Maye Atma pertaining to the Anna Maye Kosh sits comfortably upon this Pran Maye Kosh.

This verse implies that all the forms of the Atma as enumerated in these verses are basically the same consciousness performing different functions in these individual forms and therefore there is no difference between them. The different layers envisaged are hypothetical entities delineated for the purposes of understanding of how the creation works but refer to the same consciousness that prevails throughout the entire being of the individual. No one form of the Atma can be sheared off from the other if the individual is expected to survive as a living individual entity. For example, it is impractical to extract the mind and let the intellect function, or to shear off the external covering of the body called the Anna Maye Kosh and expect the other parts of the body to live and survive. Each unit depends upon the other.

The body of the creature has been crafted by the supreme creator most intelligently and wisely. His expertise in craftsmanship and his prudence is evident when we examine what precautions he took to protect the Atma or the 'true self' of the creature. In order to protect the subtle Atma which is the most delicate and sublime entity in creation from being harmed, he protected it with a five-tier security mechanism consisting of these five Koshas. Even if one protective ring got somehow damaged, the Atma would still have the other rings for its protection. For instance, even if the eye fails, the consciousness is not much affected because the other organs gear up to replace this shortfall and become more alert, active and diligent. Even if the body is paralyzed and unable to move, all the internal organs work smoothly to protect life in it. A mad man whose mind is not under control or is malfunctioning can still survive and live a long life just like a stupid fool who has no intellect and its wisdom. Again, even though the man is most unhappy and disgusted in life indicating the absence of a properly-tuned Anand Maye Kosha, he would still live on and on showing that the Atma is protected by the other sheaths in the absence of cooperation from the Anand Maye Kosh which has malfunctioned.

In this context it is pertinent to note that a wise and enlightened man in terms of metaphysics is one who is 'self realised', i.e. who has 'realised' his 'true self' by his own efforts. In other words, he has acquainted himself with the truthful entity known as the Atma or pure consciousness living in a house having these five structural walls called the Koshas. The world erroneously recognises the body consisting of these five Koshas as the gentleman concerned, but it is a grave misconception, because the house cannot be the same as its inhabitant. Here the inhabitant is the Atma, and the house is the five-layered body.]

“Verse no. 26 = The Anand Maye Atma representing the bliss sheath surrounds the innermost core called the pure consciousness or the Atma representing the supreme Brahm that is an all-pervading and universal entity residing in the bosom of all the living beings as their inner self or inner being. There is no other thing present inside this Brahm, and so the latter is deemed to be the ultimate core of all that exists. It is like the hidden

and mysterious power present inside a seed that enables it to create a tree virtually from nothing (26).

[Note—The individual creature derives its physical form and shape with the help of the Anna Maye Kosh or the external gross body; its energy, vitality, stamina and strength from the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital winds which pump in air and fresh energy into the body and drains out toxic waste from it and generally help the various organs of the body to perform their respective duties; its desires and wishes and aspirations from the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath because it is the mind that makes all hopes and desires besides creating this world of material objects and the need to enjoy them; its higher level of intellectual achievements through the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and its ultimate bliss through the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. Since these functions are manifestations of the various aspects of creation, they are called the different forms of the same Atma because all that lives is nothing but the Atma. The different names assigned to the Atma are only because it performs different functions.]”

(5) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Sarwasaar Upanishad*, verse no. 5—

“The gross aspect or part of the physical body which is build up of and nourished by the food eaten by the creature and the fundamental elements that this food contains as its basic nutrients is called the ‘Anna Maye Kosh’ or the food sheath. [This Anna Maye Kosh acts as an envelop that surrounds the Atma or pure conscious self of the creature, and hence the name ‘Kosh’ or a shell or a veil that acts as an enclosure surrounding the ‘self’ like an envelop enclosing its contents.]

When Pran and other fourteen types of life-infusing vital winds enter this gross and basically lifeless body formed by the food eaten by the creature and begin moving inside it, thereby lending it their own dynamic forces of ‘life’ and making it show all signs characteristic of ‘life’, then the part of the body in which these vital winds move about is called the ‘Pran Maye Kosh’ or the vital air sheath. [This sheath is subtler than the earlier sheath because it has air or wind element as its basic constituent instead of the grosser elements of food eaten by the creature that constitute the outer shell known as the Anna Maye Kosh.]

The third layer that surrounds the Atma is the ‘Mano Maye Kosh’ or the mind sheath because it consists of the subtle mind which helps the creature’s pure consciousness or ‘self’ to perceive the presence of the body and the external world in which it lives by the means of the fourteen instruments (as described in verse no. 4 above). This Mano Maye Kosh is internal to the other two sheaths, and closer to the Atma than them. [The mind is the subtle reception center and coordinator of all inputs originating in the external world received through the organs of perception, and it gives commands to the organs of action present in the distant corners of the body. The mind acts as the head clerk of the Emperor known as the Atma of the creature. The inputs are sorted out by the mind and necessary information stored for future retrieval in the archives of the memory and the sub-conscious. But like all head clerks, the mind cannot decide policy matters and take important decisions, and for this it relies upon the intellect called Buddhi.]

When the conscious Atma or the pure ‘self’ of the creature coordinates the inputs of all the earlier three instruments at its disposal (i.e. the ‘food sheath’ consisting of the

gross body with its sense organs of perception and action, the ‘air sheath’ which enables the body to breathe and live a fruitful life as an active entity instead of lying like a dead log of wood, and the ‘mental sheath’ which helps the Atma to make sense of all the inputs that it receives and which helps it to coordinate between the different disjointed facets of creation into one meaningful existence) and ponders over the alternatives and take intelligent decisions, it (i.e. the Atma) is helped in its endeavour by the subtler aspect of the mind called the ‘intellect’ or the ‘thinking, analytical and discriminating aspect of the mind’. So, when the Atma is attended to by the intellect which aids in its intelligent thinking, helping it in analyzing the pros and cons of a given situation, discriminating between any given two options depending upon their worth and goodness, it is said to be surrounded by the intellect sheath called the ‘Vigyan Maye Kosh’. [Vigyan implies that knowledge which is based on intelligent thinking by the instrument of the ‘intellect’ that is ‘rational, well thought after, well deliberated and well balanced’, taking into considerations all the pros and cons of any given circumstance. It is different from impulsive actions which the emotional ‘mind’ might take. So, the intellect is analytical and clinical in its approach to any given situation in this world. It acts like the chief advisor and prime minister of the Emperor represented by the Atma.]

When the Atma, along with all these instruments at its disposal, lives in a state of oblivion about its true self and its nature even though it is being provided with all the necessary instruments represented by these four layers of metaphoric ‘helpers’ who can aid the Atma in its research and ferreting out the actual ‘truth’ about its self as well as the fact that this body which it erroneously thinks to be its true ‘self’ is actually not so, it is said that it (i.e. the Atma) lives in a cocoon of ‘blissfulness’.

It is like the case of the banyan tree not knowing or being unaware of the fact that it had its origin in the small ‘seed’ which is its actual and truthful form because the whole tree is subtly and secretly present in this seed and it is from this seed that it originates, and not in the external visible format as is seen of it in this world. This external form of the tree is mortal as one day or the other it would decay and die. Similarly, the creature remains oblivious of the fact that his body is perishable and would die some day, and the only entity that would not perish is the Atma. The new birth of the creature depends upon the Atma and not the body. [This mystery is beautifully explained by sage Yagyavalkya in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse nos. 28/1-28/7.]

The creature is unaware that this body is a bundle of grossness and reprehensible things (such as flesh, muscles, bones, blood, mucous, nerves and veins, faecal and other garbage etc. enclosed in a sac-like skin—refer Yagyavalkya Upanishad, verse nos. 14-17 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition), that this body is like a prison for him, that it is a swamp of miseries and torments. Similarly, the creature takes this world to be real and everlasting quite contrary to the reality of the situation; he thinks that the pleasures and comforts that the world provides is the best thing to be had and there is no better form of happiness and bliss. And this basic misconception leads the creature to get neck-deep in this swamp and remain oblivious of the reality.

This ignorance about the truth makes it live in a fool’s paradise when it remains engrossed in the world and enjoying its comforts and pleasures. This fourth state of blissfulness is known as ‘Anand Maye Kosh’ or the bliss sheath because the Atma is surrounded by bliss and happiness (5).

[Note-- Refer *Mudagal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse 5 which lists these five Koshas. According to *Paingalo-panishad*, canto 2, verse no. 4 of the Shukla

Yajur Veda tradition, these are the following—“ ‘Annamaye Kosh’ or the food sheath, ‘Pranmaye Kosh’ or the vital wind sheath, ‘Manomaye Kosh’ or the mental sheath, ‘Vigyanmaye Kosh’ or the intellect sheath, and ‘Anandmaye Kosh’ or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object.

The *Annamaye Kosh* is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitutes food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The *Pranmaye Kosh* consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana, and Samaana) along with the five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The *Manomaye Kosh* consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the *Vigyanmaye Kosh* consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perception.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the ‘Ling Deha’ of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.

The sheath in which the pure conscious self is not aware of the ‘Ling Deha’ is called *Anandmaye Kosh*. This forms the causal body of the creature”.

These five sheaths are called the ‘Panch Kosha’.]”

-----*****-----

About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) www.amazon.com (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) www.pothi.com (in 'paper-back book' + 'e-book' versions),
- (c) www.draft2digital.com (in 'e-book' version) through the following platforms: (i) Apple (ibooks), (ii) Barnes & Noble (nook), (iii) 24 Symbols, (iv) Kobo, (v) Page Foundry, (vi) Scribd, (vii) Tolino etc.--
- (d) <https://archive.org> at : https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia

(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya

Shatkam” of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) “Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan” or the “Aadi Ramayan” based on Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitalawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) Book 1- ‘Dohawali’; (2) Book 2- ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) Book 3- ‘Kavitalawali’; (4) Book 4- ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) Book 5- ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) Book 6- ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) Book 7- ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) Book 8- ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

(B) The following Books have been published in ‘Printed-Book Deluxe Editions’ by a reputed Indian Publisher (details given below) :

1. Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.]

2. English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.

3. English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

4. English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

5. A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

Name and contact of Publisher of above Printed Books listed under (C):

Chaukhamba Publishing House, Delhi. [Sri Neeraj Gupta.]

Email < chaukhambapublishinghouse@gmail.com >

< chaukhamba_neerj@yahoo.com >

Postal Address: 4697/2, Street no. 21-A, (HDFC Bank wali Gali),
Ansari Road, Darayaganj, Delhi—110002.

Phone: Mobile (Neeraj Gupta)—+919811133683

Office: 011-23286537; 011-32996391

(C) Book under preparation:

A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit

Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

Contact details of Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia—

Postal address:-36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg, P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123,
Distt. Ayodhya (Faizabad), U.P. India.

Phone:—(India) +919451290400; +919935613060.

Email of Author: (1) ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com

(2) ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com

Facebook ID: www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

Goodreads:

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai_Kumar_Chhawchharia